

Spring 1980

GOOD WIVES: A STUDY IN ROLE DEFINITION IN NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND, 1650-1750

LAUREL THATCHER ULRICH

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University of New Hampshire

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GOOD WIVES
A STUDY IN ROLE DEFINITION IN NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND
1650-1750

BY

LAUREL TEATCHER ULRICH

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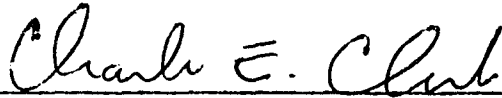
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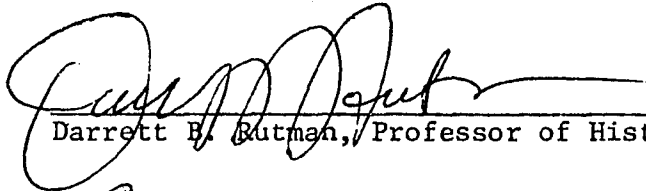
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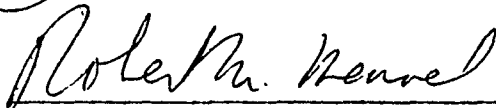
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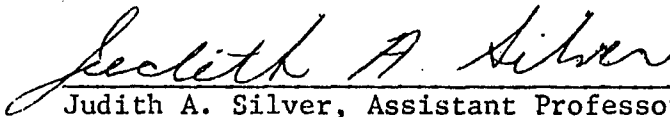
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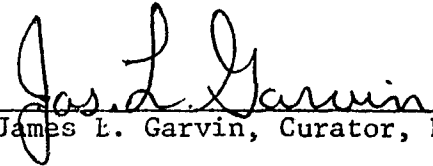
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My husband, Gail, and my children, Karl, Melinda, Nathan, Thatcher, and Amy have participated in a quite different study in "role definition" in the past four years as I have struggled to produce a book. Gail has always been a "kind husband" and "tender father," but in recent months, he has often been a "deputy wife" as well. Karl has become a better cook, Melinda a better seamstress, Thatcher a better housekeeper, and Amy a better neighbor than I. Nathan has always been a better computer programmer, now he is a better typist as well. In recent months, he has often been a "deputy wife" as well. He may be responsible for

some of the transposed letters, but he must also take credit for preserving the sanity of the author in the last stages of an overwhelming project.

List of Abbreviations

<u>EIHC</u>	<u>Essex Institute Historical Collections</u>
<u>Essex Files</u>	<u>Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts</u> , 9 volumes, (Salem, Massachusetts: The Essex Institute, 1911-1975).
<u>MPCR</u>	<u>Province and Court Records of Maine</u> , Volumes 1-6, (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1928-1975)
<u>NEHGR</u>	<u>New England Historical and Genealogical Register</u>
NH Court Papers	Manuscript Court Papers, New Hampshire State Archives, Concord, New Hampshire
<u>NLD</u>	Sybil Noyes, Charles Thornton Libby, and Walter Goodwin Davis, <u>A Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire</u> , (Portland: The Southworth-Anthoensen Press, 1928/1929)

ABSTRACT

GOOD WIVES: A STUDY IN ROLE DEFINITION IN NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND 1650-1750

by

LAUREL THATCHER ULRICH

University of New Hampshire, May, 1980

This dissertation describes the productive, sexual, and public roles of married women living in the province of New Hampshire and the two Massachusetts counties which bordered it, Essex County to the south and York County (now Maine) to the north and east. Because there are no female diaries for the period and few letters, the study depends upon an accumulation of evidence from court records, account books, probate inventories, church records, paintings, embroideries, gravestones, genealogical records, captivity narratives, sermons, and the letters and diaries of husbands and sons.

The discussion is organized around three Biblical archetypes frequently employed in early New England. "Bathsheba" explores the distinct and often competing roles of housewife and deputy husband, suggesting that it was not the work which wives performed which mattered so much as the social context of that work. Although the ability to at

least temporarily perform male work was a key responsibility of wives, economic power was always contingent upon personal relationships. For most women the primary focus of productive life was in their kitchens and yards, though interaction with other women was crucial in defining and enforcing boundaries of authority and responsibility.

"Eve" examines the sexual and reproductive roles of consorts and mothers, noting contradictory elements in folk, Puritan, and genteel images of female sexuality. Through their roles as midwives, helpful neighbors, and gossips even more than through their access to the formal authority of county courts, women upheld sexual mores in early American communities. Although the roles of "fair consort" and "godly mother" undermined the traditional denigration of Eve, they did not deny the physical nature of women, idealizing both sexual attractiveness and biological fruitfulness.

"Jael" looks at the role of frontier heroine as it developed in the ministerial literature of Metacom's Rebellion and in the French and Indian wars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. When the fighting viragoes, godly captives, and saintly wives of the literature are placed in a larger context, they point toward limited tolerance for female aggression in northern New England as well as strong identification with religion,

though not always in the form described by the ministry.

The status of women in early New England was not determined by work, by Puritanism, or by a frontier setting, but by the interrelationship of a series of complex roles--housewife, deputy husband, consort, mother, mistress, neighbor, and Christian.

Here lyes

A Worthy Matron of unspotted life,
A loving Mother and obedient wife,
A friendly Neighbor, pitiful to poor,
Whom oft she fed, and clothed with her store;
To Servants wisely awful, but yet kind,
And as they did, so they reward did find:
A true Instructor of her Family,
The which she ordered with dexterity.
The publick meetings ever did frequent,
And in her Closet constant hours she spent;
Religious in all her words and wayes,
Preparing still for death, till end of dayes:
Of all her Children, Children liv'd to see,
Then dying, left a blessed memory.

Anne Bradstreet, 1643

Introduction

Good Wives, 1650-1750

On Tuesday morning she had risen in good health. But before dinner, seized with what felt like a gas pain in her chest, she had gone to bed. By noon of the next day, when the doctor arrived, she was in agony. Though his cordials eased the pain, she continued to languish. Seven days later, on December 27, 1643 at six o'clock in the morning, Dorothy Dudley died.[1]

She had been a good wife, obedient to her husband, loving to her children, kind to her neighbors, dutiful to her servants, and as her daughter Anne Bradstreet expressed it, "religious in all her words and wayes." [2] When Thomas Dudley sat down to write the news of her death to another daughter, Mercy Woodbridge, he confessed himself "melted with sorrow." Yet he was composed enough to reiterate all these qualities in a long passage of advice. He reminded Mercy that she could honor her mother best by imitating her virtues, "for beleewe it at the tyme of partinge, nothing will lye soe heavy as omission of duty to those wee part withall nor nothing comfort more than performance of it." [3] Fifty years later, Mercy's own children could comfort themselves at her death by repeating the familiar

promise. Acknowledging their mother's goodness, they promised to "tread in her steps." [4]

Twentieth century readers are likely to approach such pieties with impatience if not with cynicism. When we read on a gravestone that a woman was "Eminent for Holiness, Prayerfulness, Watchfulness, Zeal, Prudence, Sincerity, Humility, Meekness, Patience, Weanedness From ye World, Self-denial, Publick-Spiritedness, Diligence, Faithfulness & Charity," we smile. [5] It is difficult for us to approach a world in which neither innovation nor individuality was celebrated, in which the rich particulars of daily life were willfully reduced to formulaic abstraction. Yet the purpose of an epitaph was not to commemorate the women's personality, but to transcend it. A poem pinned to a bier or an inscription carved in stone represented the hope that at the moment of death the particular became the eternal.

"Womans the centre & the lines are men," young Seaborn Cotton wrote in his commonplace book early in the 1650's. The sexual connotation of the metaphor must first have attracted this schoolboy copyist. Yet its meaning had a larger resonance. As wives and mothers, women have been seen as custodians of perpetuity. "Look to my little babes my dear remains," Anne Bradstreet had written as she contemplated the possibility of her own death. [6] In the colonial world, children linked past and future in the very

names which they bore. Three of Dorothy Dudley's five children called a daughter for their mother, establishing a tradition unbroken for more than a century. Living within a few miles of each other in New Hampshire in 1700, were three great granddaughters, Dorothy Smith, Dorothy Gilman, and Dorothy Leavitt. Dorothy Smith had no children, but her sister Mercy named three babies "Dorothy" before one survived the first month of life. Her brother, John Cotton, baptized his own Dorothy in July of 1693. This Dorothy gave birth to a sixth generation namesake in April of 1722, a Dorothy who lived to bear another in 1745, one hundred years after the death of the first.[7]

In a very real sense, wives and mothers have represented the fixed circle of human history, a presumed counterweight to the moving line which traces the founding of the commonwealths or the development of ideas. Seaborn Cotton's little book can be seen as an extended commentary on this theme. "Circles draw many lines unto the Centre/ but love gives leave to onely one to enter," he wrote just before his marriage to Dorothy Bradstreet, Dorothy Dudley's granddaughter. In the cramped pages of his book, college ballads abruptly gave way to genealogical entries in a record continued for three generations. From Seaborn and Dorothy Cotton's first child, born November 21, 1655, to the last child of their granddaughter Dorothy Gockin, born

August 10, 1734, there are more than two dozen terse entries. Only subtle changes in handwriting mark the transition from one cycle of reproduction to another.[8]

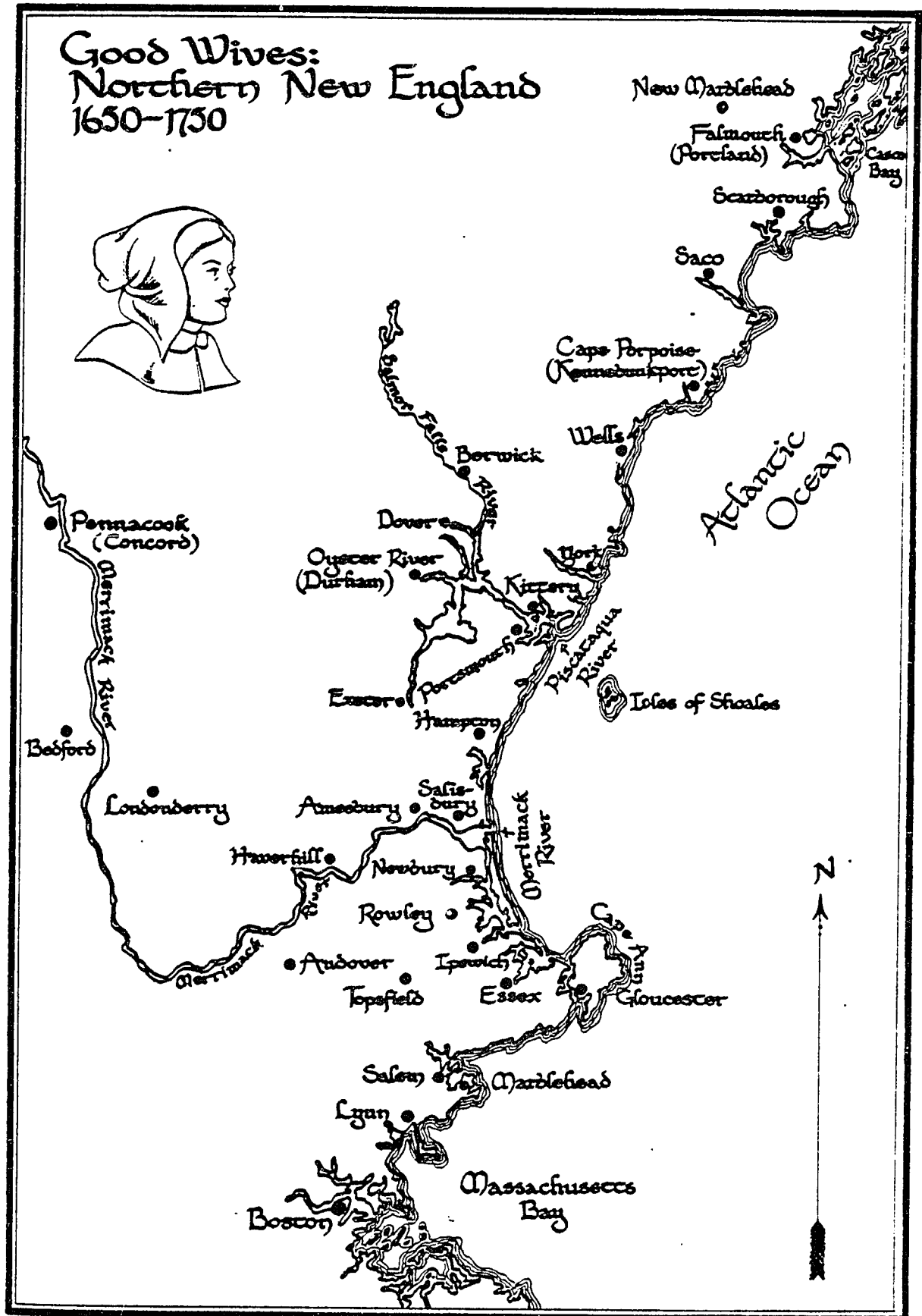
In 1750 as in 1650, women in northern New England rocked cradles, stirred their iron pots, and turned the great wooden wheels which have come to symbolize the picturesque monotony of their lives. Yet change permeated the exterior life of northern New England in the years between the marriage of Dorothy Cotton in the middle of the seventeenth century and the marriage of her great granddaughter Dorothy Gookin in the middle of the eighteenth. In that hundred years, the settlements north of Boston experienced political upheaval, religious conflict, and four devastating wars. The coastal towns grew from frontier outposts to prospering links in an imperial trade network, and by 1750 in the remote "eastern parts" tiny agricultural settlements had begun to sprinkle the interior. Even on the domestic and personal level the landscape had altered. The two-room houses of the seventeenth century, built facing south with one room over the other doubled in space and acquired lean-tos, while ovens moved from the dooryard to the rear of an improved kitchen fireplace. After 1700, chickens and sheep multiplied in towns like Haverhill and Dover and declined in ports like Salem and Portsmouth. Ministers acquired wigs, meeting houses

acquired steeples, and elaborate carved gravestones replaced the rude granite boulders or wooden fence rails which marked the graves of the first settlers.

Historians have written of these changes. They have described the struggle between France and England which dominated the exterior life of New England in these years and created havoc for three generations in the settlements in the north; they have discussed conflicting proprietary claims within the English colonies, the boundary disputes between Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and the political and economic conquest of the eastern parts by the Bay Colony; they have begun in recent years to examine in detail the internal conflicts of towns and parishes, to explore commonplace but little understood aspects of material culture, to quantify the demographic explosion which in part fueled the dynamic changes of the eighteenth century. But as yet they have given little attention to the women who stood at the "fixed circle" of life in these years.

This is understandable, for the chore facing the historian who would write of female experience in colonial America is no less than to reverse the process by which flesh and blood women became "good wives," that is to somehow rediscover the variegated humanity submerged in the ideal. What specifically did it mean to be a "loving mother," an "obedient wife," and a "friendly Neighbor"?

Good Wives: Northern New England 1650-1750



Women cooked. They spun wool. But what else did they do with their days? What were the concrete realities of their lives in northern New England? How did these differ from men?

On the surface it is obvious that some activities in colonial society carried gender labels and some did not. Men were elected to representative assemblies. Women nursed babies. Both men and women experienced religious conversion and Indian captivity. Few members of either sex wrote poetry. Yet within the larger outlines, the patterns are far from clear. The first objective of this study, therefore, has been to recover lost detail. At first glance this appeared formidable. The archives contain no female diaries written in New England before 1750 and few female letters. Among published works there are only the brief "Valedictory and Monitory Writing" of Sarah Goodhue, the captivity narratives of Mary Rowlandson and Elizabeth Hansen, and the poetry of Anne Bradstreet. Yet significant evidence of female life lay buried in a mass of materials created for other purposes--sermons, account books, probate inventories, church records, court records, and the private papers of husbands and sons. A major task of this dissertation has been to sift out that material, fragment by fragment.

The second objective, no less difficult, has been to discover an underlying order in the colorful, but often puzzling, miscellany which resulted. The major analytical tool in this effort has been "role analysis." In the sociologist's jargon, a role is "the sum total of the culture patterns associated with a particular status. It thus includes the attitudes, values and behavior ascribed by the society to any and all persons occupying this status." Role analysis has both normative and behavioral dimensions. A social scientist studying the role of housewife in twentieth-century America might ask a group of women what tasks they felt wives should perform as well as what jobs they actually did daily, weekly, or monthly. Such a study would focus not just on cultural expectations, the abstract "role," but also on "role performance," on how people behaved. But it might go further, asking women "how successful do you believe you have been in managing the family budget" or "how does it make you feel when you fail to change the sheets weekly?" It is then measuring such factors as "role satisfaction" and "role strain." If such a questionnaire were administered to similar groups of women at intervals of ten or twenty years or even given at the same time to women of different ages, it would measure "role change" and would thus acquire an historical dimension.[9]

Obviously a student of women in seventeenth and eighteenth-century New England cannot administer questionnaires. An exploration of private life in pre-modern America (and probably in any other historical setting) is impossible without a liberal and unscientific appropriation of hints and hunches. One solution to this problem is to concentrate upon narrowly defined problems which will yield to precise measurement, such things as fertility or inheritance, for instance. This kind of study often yields extremely interesting data, but without having some notion of what childbearing or the ownership of property meant to women in colonial America it is difficult to know what to make of their abundant productivity in one area and their obvious disability in the other. Is it necessarily true that "constant childbearing was debilitating" as one historian has claimed? It is easy to perceive the "lack of options" in the lives of colonial women, but without making some effort to recover the unspoken assumptions which governed their world we can derive little meaning from a study of their lives.[10]

Role analysis cannot be applied with scientific precision, but as a general concept it is useful in approaching the history of women in the traditional world. It recognizes that informal structures and unwritten codes can be as effective in determining behavior as legal and

economic systems. It allows for diversity, and even for contradiction, in acknowledging that a complex role like that of a wife is really composed of many roles. But it is especially congenial in a study of colonial women because it approaches so closely the traitorial manner of commemorating personality. Anne Bradstreet did not describe Dorothy Dudley as a unique individual but as the successful occupant of a series of discrete positions. She was a "worthy matron," "an obedient wife," "a loving mother," "a kind mistress," and "a friendly neighbor." For seventeenth-century readers these stock phrases were cues which unlocked a whole store of specific images. They had no need for a complete role description. For twentieth-century readers the detail is essential because we have lost so many of the assumptions which governed the traditional world.

"Good Wives" is a descriptive study. It will concentrate on the productive, sexual, and public roles of married women living in the province of New Hampshire and the two Massachusetts counties which bordered it, Essex County to the south and York County (now Maine) to the north and east. No special claim is made either for the uniqueness or the cohesiveness of the region, which stretched from the commercial port of Salem to the Indian trading posts at Casco Bay, from the agricultural villages

of the Massachusetts interior to fishing communities on the Isles of Shoals. "Good Wives" is also a topical study. In organization and intent, it is a little like the elongated samplers worked by young women in seventeenth-century New England. Unlike eighteenth and nineteenth-century samplers, which were decorative pieces made to be framed and hung on a wall, these first samplers were true patterns, one band of embroidery added to another, each incomplete in itself but capable of transfer and elaboration on a larger ground. In the best of samplers, and perhaps in this book, the appeal of the whole is in the accumulated texture of the parts.

Something of the complexity of the topic is suggested in the names applied to married women in early New England. In their derivations from Middle English, the terms husband and huswife are parallel, denoting not so much a man and a woman attached to each other as a man or woman responsible for a piece of property. The forms of address most commonly applied to married women in seventeenth-century New England retained this economic connotation. Women of ordinary status were called Goodwife, usually shortened to Goody, as in Goody Prince or Goody Baker or Goody Lee. By definition a "goodwife" was "the mistress of a house or other establishment," though the formal designation Mistress (and its abbreviation Mrs.) were reserved for the wives or daughters of ministers or men of social distinction. For a

prominent widow or an older woman with a married son, Mistress might become Madam, but only two or three women in the entire century were ever formally addressed as Lady. [11] The Goody Bakers, Madam Saltonstalls, and Mistress Browns of northern New England shared a common vocation. They were housewives.

The housekeeping role was defined by a space (a house and its surrounding yard), a set of tasks (cooking, washing, sewing, milking, spinning, and gardening), and an area of authority (the internal economy of a family). A woman may not have milked her own cows or scoured her own kettles, but she was responsible for seeing that someone did. By English tradition, husbands primarily worked "abroad"--either in outlying fields, the woods, the waterfront, in the public areas of town, or at sea. [12] Authority over the products of family work roughly corresponded to this division of labor. Husbands in agricultural areas kept account of field products and were involved in large scale transactions involving grain, which often functioned as a form of exchange in New England. Their wives managed the servants and held the keys to the cupboards, boxes, and rooms containing household provisions. [13]

This specialization of function was seen to mitigate in some way the harsh command to obey. As one New England minister explained it, "The Husband is to be acknowledged to

hold a Superiority, which the Wife is practically to allow; yet in respect of all others in the Oeconomical Society, she is invested with an Authority over them by God." [14]

Female responsibility within the "Oeconomical Society" included more than housekeeping, however. In labor short New England, wives might be found planting corn, gathering thatch, loaning oxen, directing field hands, trading with the Indians, or filling orders for planks and staves. [15] Although these activities emerge rather vividly from the record, they were not so much a response to a frontier environment as an extension of a traditional role. In old England as in New, a married woman was both wife and deputy-husband. The wives of farmers, merchants, fishermen, shopkeepers, timbermen, and craftsmen were responsible for furthering their husbands work as well as their own. These duties might be of the most menial sort, but they could also involve considerable skill and authority. A deputy is not just a helper, but also at least potentially a surrogate. The role of deputy-husband underscores not just the supportive and essentially subordinate position of early American wives but also the elasticity inherent in their calling.

In some English dialects the words wife and woman are synonyms. In northern New England in the century between 1650 and 1750, they were virtually so. Almost all females

who reached the age of maturity married. This was in contrast to Europe where during the same period, it is estimated, at least ten per cent of the population remained single. American women were probably younger at first marriage than English women, but not so young as folklore has imagined.[16] Mercy Dudley was eighteen when she married John Woodbridge, who at twenty-six was still unsettled in his profession.[17] But on the average, women married somewhere between the ages of twenty and twenty-two. Husbands were two or three years older.

Perhaps the wider the age gap the easier it was for a woman to "reverence, fear, and obey" as society and the scriptures taught. "Know that that God that hath graciously placed thy good husband here will be here with thee and comfort thee if thou submitt and trust to him," Thomas Dudley told Mercy. The blurring of the pronoun reference was perhaps unintentional, but it is no less instructive. Submission to God and submission to one's husband were part of the same religious duty. But the notion of male supremacy must not be wrenched from the larger concept of an organic social order in which rights and responsibilities were reciprocal and in which terms like "individuality" or "self-reliance" had little place. The command to obedience is important, but it is part of a larger whole.

It was difficult for men and women of the premodern world to conceive of equality. In the hierarchical structure which sustained the social order, one human being was of necessity almost always subject to another--child to parent, servant to master, subject to ruler. When Samuel Willard of Boston came to define the relationship between husband and wife in his Complete Body of Divinity, he puzzled over this problem. He could not deviate from the God-given right of husbands to rule, yet he apologized for the language which he used, "being a Metaphor from a Band of Souldiers." It seemed inadequate to describe the bond between husband and wife. "Of all the Orders which are unequals," he wrote, "these do come nearest to an Equality, and in several respects they stand upon even ground. These do make a pair, which infers so far a Parity." [18] A wife was more than a housekeeper or a helper. She was a "precious Yokefellow," or in the more formal but no less resonant appellation commonly used in early America, a consort. Mutual love and spiritual equality made two persons function as one. William Secker, an English minister, employed a whole series of metaphors to express this ideal. A husband and wife, he wrote, were like two instruments making music, two streams in one current, a pair of oars rowing a boat to heaven (with children and servants as passengers), two "milch kine" coupled to the Ark of God,

two cherubim, two tables of stone on which the law was written.[19] This concept of the good wife had both sexual and religious connotations. A consort might be a harmonious lover as well as a fellow traveler on the road to salvation.

Upon her husband's death, a consort became a relict. This now archaic synonym for widow evokes that state well; in etymology and in usage, the term was identical to the modern relic. The death of a mother did not mean the dissolution of a family; the death of a father did. As one patriarchy dissolved and others formed, there was a shuffling both of people and of things. Household inventories taken by trusted neighbors soon after death are an important source of information for twentieth-century historians, but they are also a reminder that death in early America meant a redistribution of roles as well as resources. By law, a widow usually inherited at least a third of the household goods, and she was entitled to use or to receive income from a third of the real estate until she died or remarried. If she had minor children, she might retain practical control of the entire estate until her sons or daughters came of age, but its final disposition would be determined by court order or by her husband's will. A widow was ensured maintenance at whatever level the estate allowed, but only rarely did she retain full control of her house and yard or even the assembly of pots, beds, and cows

which had once been her domain-[20]

For some women the transition from "mistress" to "relict" must have been difficult. Losing a husband, they lost an occupation and a territory as well. On the other hand, firm possession of dower might provide an economic base from which to negotiate a second marriage. One need not overstate the economic disabilities of women to recognize that their security was tied to something other than property. In a very real sense, wives were "moveables," like the household possessions they came to inherit. A relict was a remainder, a symbolic if ever so beloved remnant of something lost.

These disparate and often contradictory roles did not exist in isolation. A married woman in early New England was a housewife, a deputy-husband, a consort, and perhaps a relict. But she was also a mother, a mistress, a neighbor, a daughter, and, by whatever definition she chose, a Christian. This larger pattern of association dominates Anne Bradstreet's poem for her mother. The epitaph charts a series of vertical relationships--husband to wife, mother to child, mistress to servant, rich to poor--the familiar seventeenth-century social hierarchy. But in the phrase "friendly Neighbor" it hints at horizontal links possible at each level. Finally, in highlighting Mistress Dudley's constant prayer and frequent attendance at "publick

meetings," it points to a religious role which was at least potentially independent of any other social relationship.

The poem is not just a bland rendering of traditional pieties. It is a social graph. Like the diagram of an anthropologist, it places one woman within the complex web of relationships which defined her position as a "worthy matron." Often relationships with other family members and especially with other women were as important as relationships with a husband in determining the position of a wife. On the frontier, war introduced a vivid and at times almost garish strand into the quiet mesh which bound female life, as a few women unexpectedly became heroines as well as wives, but the roles of "Indian captive" and "frontier defender" did not challenge so much as magnify traditional definitions, enlarging the roles of deputy husband and courageous Christian. Anne Bradstreet's gentle poem sketches the major contours of female life in northern New England, delineating roles which were as important in 1750 as in 1650. The important question, of course, is how those roles were interpreted and fulfilled.

In September of 1749, Dorothy Dudley's great-great-great granddaughter, Peggy Holycke, helped her brother Augustus compose a rollicking epitaph for a dear departed and obviously eccentric aunt, who "Mouldering Lies beneath this Place/ The Relique of the Fairest

Face." Despite her crimes, the poem insisted, she was a
 "most unerring Friend to Truth:"

To Pride and to Hypocrisy a Foe,
 In short a very Saint from Top to toe,
 What tho' some slanderers there be who ne'er,
 Will credit what we say, or what they hear,
 Yet sure O Reader what I write I know:
 She often very often told me so.[21]

As Peggy Holyoke knew, real women often deviated dramatically from ideal women. Obviously, in a hundred year period and in a region which included sophisticated commercial towns as well as frontier outposts, there were wide variations in female behavior. Over a century, ideals themselves were subject to change; if Anne Bradstreet ever wrote a mock epitaph (or any other sort of comic verse) it has not survived.

"Good Wives" describes a diverse and changing world, but its primary objective will neither be to elaborate or to explain change, but to define certain broad patterns within which change occurred. It will focus upon three role clusters, each of them symbolized in a Biblical archetype frequently employed in early New England. "Bathsheba" explores the working roles performed by housewives and deputy husbands; "Eve" examines the sexual, reproductive, and nurturing roles of consorts and mothers, while "Jael" delineates the heroic roles which became visible in the stress of war. "Good Wives" is an exercise in role definition. It is also a description of neglected aspects

of daily life in Essex County, Massachusetts and the neighboring settlements of Maine and New Hampshire in the years between 1650 and 1750.

When Thomas Dudley wrote to his daughter Mercy Woodbridge, telling her of her mother's death, he not only praised his wife's godliness, but recognizing the void left in Mercy's life, he attempted to take up some of the specific duties Dorothy laid down that Tuesday morning when she was seized with a pain in her breast. He offered to pay for a midwife to attend Mercy on her coming confinement. He promised to send her through her Uncle Parker a "sowce in a bagge." Finally, he begged her to "lett mee have now thy letters as thy mother had and I will answeare them." [22]

As a loving parent, he understood the value of fine abstractions. But he also knew the worth of sausage. To enter the world of Dorothy Dudley and her contemporaries requires an appreciation for both.

1. Thomas Dudley to Mrs. Mercy Woodbridge, 28 December 1643, Connecticut Historical Society Collections, (Hartford, 1924) XXI, 25. The editorial note incorrectly identifies the "mother" referred to in the letter as Dudley's second wife.
2. Anne Bradstreet, "An Epitaph On my dear and ever honoured Mother Mrs. Dorothy Dudley, who deceased Decemb. 27. 1643. and of her age, 61," in Several Poems (Boston: 1678), p. 220.
3. Thomas Dudley to Mrs. Mercy Woodbridge, p. 26.
4. Rev. Timothy Woodbridge to Rev. John Woodbridge, 27 July 1691, Connecticut Historical Society Collections, (Hartford, 1924) XXI, 339-340.
5. Hannah Moody gravestone, Old Burying Ground, Main Street, York Village, Maine. d. 29 January 1727/8.
6. Bradstreet, "Before the Birth of one of Her Children," Several Poems, p. 239.
7. Sybil Noyes, Charles Thornton Libby, and Walter Goodwin Davis, A Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire, (Portland, Maine, The Southworth-Anthoensen Press: 1928-1939), pp. 164, 646, 751, 209; Rolfe Manuscript Genealogy, Old Newbury Historical Society, Newbury, Massachusetts, "Woodbridge,"; "Tufts Genealogy," New England Historical Genealogical Record 41 (1897) 300; "The Cotton Family," New England Historical Genealogical Record, I (1847), 164-165; "Peter Coffin," Sibley's Harvard Graduates, IX, 291.
8. "Rev. Seaborn Cotton Commonplace Book," MS, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, pp. 177-188.
9. This paragraph was based upon F. Ivan Nye and Viktor Gecas, "The Role Concept: Review and Delineation," in F. Ivan Nye, editor, Role Structure and Analysis of the Family, (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1976), pp. 3-14. The definition of

"role" is that of Ralph Linton, quoted by Nye and Gecas, p. 4.

10. The quotations are from Mary Beth Norton, "The Myth of the Golden Age," in Carol Ruth Berkin and Mary Beth Norton, ed., Women of America: A History, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979) p. 44. Norton is of course measuring the lives of colonial women not only against the standards of today but against the stereotypes promoted by female historians of the early twentieth century.
11. OED, V, 424,471; IV, 296-297; VI, 541,15. "Madam" Pepperrell became "Lady" Pepperrell when her husband became the first native American baronet. The term "goody" survived into the nineteenth-century as a name for a woman who took care of students' rooms at Harvard. Like the abbreviation "hussy" (for housewife), it lost caste. Milford M. Matthews, A Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).
12. This division of labor is clearly described in English prescriptive literature for the period, much of which is well summarized in Jay Allen Anderson, "A Solid Sufficiency: An Ethnography of Yeoman Foodways in Stuart England," diss. University of Pennsylvania 1971, [passim.]
13. E.g. Essex Files, VI, 438; NH Court Papers, I, 353; and Province and Court Records of Maine (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1928-1975), VI, 86. Testimony in Essex Files, VII, 43 refers to an account book in which the husband recorded hogsheads of peas and to a cellar key which he didn't recognize and which he assumed to be his wife's.
14. Samuel Willard, A Complete Body of Divinity in Two Hundred and Fifty Expository Lectures (Boston, 1726), p. 610.
15. Essex Files, II, 442; NH Court Papers, I, 35; Essex Files II, 295-297; II, 407-409; VI, 412.

16. Data on New England marriage patterns are summarized in Robert V. Wells, "Quaker Marriage Patterns in a Colonial Perspective," William & Mary Quarterly, Third Series, XXIX (1972), especially pp. 428, 438.

17. Savage, 4, 631.

18. Willard, Complete Body of Divinity, 609-612, II. For a more detailed discussion of this view as it related to ministerial literature in general see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," American Quarterly, XXVIII (Spring 1976), especially pp. 28-30, also Edmund Morgan, The Puritan Family, (NH. Harper & Row, 1966) pp. 17-28.

19. William Secker, A Wedding Ring, (Boston, 1690), n.p.

20. This point is elaborated in chapter two. See especially notes 4 and 5. An interesting example of limited ownership is in the will of Richard Martyn of Portsmouth, 1693, who gave his wife "my best feather beed & boulster & the curtains & vallens with the coverlid belonging to them, which she made Since she was my wife." New Hampshire State Papers, XXXI, 376.

21. Holycke Papers, MS, Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts, Box I, Folder 4.

22. Thomas Dudley to Mrs. Mercy Woodbridge, p. 26.

Part One

Eathsheba

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above
 rubies.
 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that
 he shall have no need of spoil.
 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.
 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her
 hands.
 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from
 afar.
 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to
 her household, and a portion to her maidens.
 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of
 her hands she planteth a vineyard.
 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her
 arms.
 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle
 goeth not out by night.
 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the
 distaff.
 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth
 forth her hands to the needy.
 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her
 household are clothed with scarlet.
 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is
 silk and purple.
 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the
 elders of the land.
 She maketh fine linen and selleth it; and delivereth girdles
 unto the merchant.
 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice
 in time to come.
 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and her tongue is the law
 of kindness.
 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth
 not the bread of idleness.
 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband
 also, and he praiseth her.
 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them
 all.
 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that
 feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.
 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works
 praise her in the gates.

Proverbs 31: 10-29

Chapter One

The Ways Of Her Household

By English tradition a woman's environment was the family dwelling and the yard or yards surrounding it. Though the exact composition of her setting obviously depended upon the occupation and economic status of her husband, its general outlines were surprisingly similar regardless of where it was located.[1] The difference between an urban "houselot" and a rural "homelot" was not as dramatic as one might suppose. Gardens and pig pens were part of city life even in the middle of the eighteenth century, and at least some town dwellers managed to keep a cow. Housewives at all economic levels tuned their work to the cycles of the sun and the rhythms of the agricultural calendar.

Women in early America were responsible for the perennial service chores--cooking, washing, mending, and cleaning--which have been the common lot of women in every generation. But most of them also grew part of their food and manufactured or processed some of the commodities used in their homes. They cut up and salted meat, gathered and preserved fruit and berries, milked cows, cultivated kitchen gardens, fed swine or poultry, and sometimes made soap or candles. In early New England, all of these tasks were

considered women's work. So were spinning, knitting, plain sewing, quilting, brewing, churning, and cheesemaking, though other crafts related to food and fiber processing--weaving, fulling, tanning, tailoring, milling, and maltmaking--were assigned to men.

If we were to draw a line around the housewife's domain it would first enclose the kitchen and its appendages--the cellars, pantries, brewhouses, milkhouses, washhouses, and butteries which appear in various combinations in household inventories. It would then move to the exterior of the house where a melange of animal and vegetable life flourished among the straw, husks, clutter, and muck. Bypassing the shop and the heavy farm equipment, it would encircle the pig pen, the milkyard, the well, and the henhouse. It would surround the vegetable garden growing near the orchard and perhaps the orchard itself--though husbands pruned and planted trees and eventually supervised the making of cider, good housewives strung their wash between the branches and in season harvested fruit for pies and preserves. Although the line demarking the housewife's world would not cross the fences which defined outlying fields of Indian corn or barley, in berry or mushroom season, it would extend into nearby field and marsh, and in spells of dearth--or of leisure--reach to the shore.

Housewives commanded a limited realm. But they were neither isolated nor self-sufficient. Even in farming settlements, families found it essential to bargain for needed goods and services. This is no more apparent than in the product so often used to symbolize agrarian self-reliance in early America-- homespun woolen cloth.[2] Herding was as much a community as a family responsibility. Weaving and fulling were skilled crafts limited to a few men in a single neighborhood or village. Even carding and spinning, the traditional fireside tasks, were frequently hired out.[3] What was true of wool was also true of linen. A family might grow its own flax, have it retted, singled and hackled by a flax dresser, send it out to be woven, and then consign it to the bleach fields or dyer for finishing.[4] In every decade and at all social levels, early Americans depended upon each other. Of necessity, the housewife's calling took her into the houses of her neighbors and into the cartways of her village or town. For prosperous and socially prominent women, community interdependence took on another meaning as well. Prosperity meant charity, and in early New England charity meant personal responsibility for nearby neighbors.

Thus, housekeeping had both economic and social dimensions. None of these was unique to New England. In fact, each aspect of housekeeping described here can be

found in idealized form in the Bible in the description of the "virtuous woman" of Proverbs, chapter thirty-one. The Puritans called this paragon "Bathsheba," assuming rather logically that Solomon could only have learned such an appreciation for huswifery from his mother. Forgotten in their ecumina to female virtue was the rooftop bather whose beauty brought King David to grief. In English and American sermons, Bathsheba was remembered as a virtuous housewife, a godly woman whose industrious labors gave mythical significance to the ordinary tasks assigned to her sex-[5]

As described in Proverbs, Bathsheba is a willing servant to her family: "She riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household."

She is a skilled manufacturer: "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands."

She is a hard-working agriculturist: "With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard."

She is a resourceful trader: "She is like the merchants' ships: she bringeth her food from afar."

And she is a good neighbor: "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."

Because her realm includes servants as well as young children, her ability to direct, to inspire, and to nurture others is as important to her success as hard work. "She

openeth her mouth with wisdom; and her tongue is the law of kindness." Her industry and her charity give legitimacy to her wealth. Though dressed in silk and purple, "strength and honour are her clothing." Her goal is not public distinction but private competence. Her husband is "known in the gates," but her greatest reward is in looking well to "the ways of her household." In doing so, she earns the devotion of her children, the praise of her husband, and the commendation of God.

To describe this virtuous Bathsheba is to outline the major components of the housekeeping role in early America. Some of these activities have received greater attention in the literature than others. For most historians, as for almost all antiquarians, the quintessential early American woman has been a churner of cream and a spinner of wool. Because home manufacturing has all but disappeared from modern housekeeping, many scholars have assumed that the key change in female economic life has been a shift from "production" to "consumption," a shift precipitated by the industrial revolution.[6] This is far too simple, obscuring the variety which existed even in the pre-industrial world.

Setting aside for the moment the social skills involved in housekeeping--the nurturing, managing, and charitable responsibilities described in the myth of Bathsheba--we can see how relatively subtle shifts in emphasis among the

economic skills--service, manufacturing, agriculture, and trade--might create pronounced differences in patterns of daily work. Evidence derived from 401 household inventories from Essex and York counties sketches the major economic variations in the region. (Table I-1)

Predictably, home manufacturing, as measured by ownership of dairying and textile processing equipment, was more widespread in the farming settlements of Essex County in 1670 than in the more remote fishing and sawmill villages of frontier Maine. With few fences and less hay, the York County planters probably let their scraggly cows browse in the woods, killing them for meat in winter but expecting little milk in any season. In such a setting, few families bothered with sheep, which were easy prey for wolves. By 1700, however, the dairying statistics for the two counties had almost reversed themselves. Flax appeared almost as often in York County as in Essex and sheep even more frequently. The hinterland was becoming agricultural. The proportionate decline in cows and churns in Essex County is explained by the increasing diversity of Massachusetts economy as commercial centers like Salem began to diverge from their agricultural surroundings. Extracting urban Salem inventories from the larger 1700 sample makes this shift obvious. (Table II-2) Although the wives of Salem shopkeepers, craftsmen, and mariners still kept a pig or two

"at the door," agriculture had become a less pronounced theme in their daily work. Many farm wives in Essex County continued to milk cows, but most women in the region's largest town did not. At the same time, luxury items like looking glasses, framed pictures, or quilts, which were still rare in the country, had become quite visible. Thus, rather straightforward contrasts between frontier, farming, and commercial communities explain many of the variations in the inventory data.

To more fully understand the diverse ways in which the Bathsheba model was reflected in daily life, we must turn from the general to the particular. Beatrice Plummer, Hannah Grafton, and Magdalen Wear were ordinary women who lived and died in New England in the years before 1750. They experienced neither the lustre of wealth nor the abject dependence of the propertyless poor. They were common housekeepers, mistresses of pots and kettles. One of them lived on the frontier, another on a farm, and a third in town. Because they were real women, however, and not hypothetical examples, the ways of their households do not always fit neatly into analytical categories. A careful examination of their kitchens and chambers suggests the varied complexity as well as the underlying unity in the lives of early American women.

* * *

Let us begin with Beatrice Plummer of Newbury, Massachusetts.[7] Forgetting that death brought her neighbors into the house on January 24, 1672, we can use the probate inventory which they prepared to reconstruct the normal pattern of her work. There is no way of knowing whether her husband's approaching death interrupted the seasonal routines of housekeeping in the weeks and months before, but circumstantial evidence suggests that it did not. The household inventory includes the expected things, and they are found in the expected places.

With a clear estate of 343 pounds, Francis Plummer had belonged to the "middling sort" who were the church members and freeholders of the Puritan settlement of Newbury. As an immigrant of 1653, he had listed himself as a "linnen weaver," but he soon became a farmer as well.[8] At his death, his loom and tackling stood in the "shop" with his pitchforks, his hoes, and his tools for smithing and carpentry. Plummer had integrated four smaller plots to form one continuous sixteen-acre farm. An additional twenty acres of salt marsh and meadow provided hay and forage for his small herd of cows and sheep. His farm provided a comfortable living for his family, which at this stage of his life included only his second wife Beatrice and her grandchild by a previous marriage. Had not death prevented him, he might have filled this January day in a number of

productive ways, moving the loom into the sparsely furnished hall, for example, or taking his yoke of oxen to the wood lot "near the little river" to cut wood for the large fireplace that was the center of Beatrice's working world.

The house over which Beatrice presided must have looked much like surviving dwellings from seventeenth-century New England with its "Hall" and "Parlor" on the ground floor and two "chambers" above. A space designated in the inventory only as "another Roome" held the family's collection of pots, kettles, dripping pans, trays, buckets, and earthenware. Perhaps this kitchen had been added to the original house as a leanto as was frequently the case in New England.[9] The upstairs chambers were not bedrooms but storage rooms for foodstuffs and out of season equipment. The best bed with its bolster, pillows, blanket, and coverlet stood in the parlor; a second bed occupied one corner of the kitchen, while a cupboard, a "great chest," a table, and a backless bench called a "form" furnished the hall. More food was found in the "cellar" and in the "dairy house," a room which may have stood at the coolest end of the kitchen leanto.[10]

The Plummer house was devoid of ornament, but its contents bespeak such comforts as conscientious yeomanry and good huswifery afforded. On this winter morning, the dairy house held four and a half "flitches" or sides of bacon, a

quarter of a barrel of salt pork, twenty-eight pounds of cheese, and four pounds of butter. Upstairs in a chamber were more than twenty-five bushels of "English" grain--barley, oats, wheat, and rye. (The Plummers apparently reserved their Indian corn, stored in another location, for their animals.) When made into malt by a village specialist, barley would become the basis for beer. Two bushels of malt were already stored in the house. The oats might appear in a variety of dishes, from plain breakfast porridge to "flummery," a gelatinous dish flavored with spices and dried fruit-[11] But the wheat and rye were almost certainly reserved for bread and pies. The fine hair sieves stored with the grain in the hall chamber suggest that Beatrice Plummer was particular about her baking, preferring a finer flour than came directly from the miller. A "bushell of pease & beans" found near the grain and a full barrel of cider in the cellar are the only vegetables and fruit listed in the inventory, though small quantities of pickles, preserves or dried herbs might have escaped notice. Perhaps the Plummers added variety to their diet by trading some of their abundant supply of grain for cabbages, turnips, sugar, molasses, and spices.

Even without additions they had the basic components of the yeoman diet described in English agricultural literature of the seventeenth-century. Although the eighteenth century

would add a little chocolate or tea as well as increasing quantities of tiny "petators" to the New England farmer's diet, the bread, cider, and boiled meat which fed Francis and Beatrice Plummer also fed their counterparts a century later.[12]

Since wives were involved with early morning milking, breakfast of necessity featured prepared foods or leftovers--toasted bread, cheese, and perhaps meat and turnips kept from the day before, any of this washed down with cider or beer in winter, with milk in summer. Only on special occasions would there be pie or doughnuts. Dinner was the main meal of the day. Here a housewife with culinary aspirations and an ample larder could display her specialities. After harvest Beatrice Plummer might have served roast pork or goose with apples, in spring an eel pie flavored with parsley and winter savcry, and in summer a leek soup or gooseberry cream, but for ordinary days, the most common menu was boiled meat with whatever "sauce" the season provided--dried peas or beans, parsnips, turnips, onions, cabbage, or garden greens. A heavy pudding stuffed into a cloth bag could steam atop the vegetables and meat. The broth from this boiled dinner might reappear at supper as "pottage" with the addition of minced herbs and some oatmeal or barley for thickening. Supper, like breakfast, was a simple meal. Bread, cheese, and beer were as welcome

at the end of a winter day as at the beginning. In summer, egg dishes and fruit tarts provided more varied nutrition.

Preparing the simplest of these meals required both judgement and skill. As Gervase Markham, an English writer of the seventeenth century quipped, a woman who was "utterly ignorant" of cookery could "then but perform half her vow; for she may love and obey, but she cannot cherish, serve, and keep him with that true duty which is ever expected." [13] The most basic of the housewife's skills was building and regulating fires--a task so fundamental that it must have appeared more as habit than craft. Summer and winter, day and night, she kept a few brands smouldering, ready to stir into flame as needed. The cavernous fireplaces of early New England were but a century removed from the open fires of medieval houses, and they retained some of the characteristics of the latter. Standing inside one of these huge openings today, a person can see the sky above. Seventeenth-century housewives did stand in their fireplaces, which were conceived less as enclosed spaces for a single blaze than as accessible working surfaces upon which several small fires might be built. Preparing several dishes, a cook could move from one fire to another, turning a spit, checking the state of the embers under a skillet, adjusting the height of a pot hung from the lugpole by its adjustable trammel. The complexity of fire-tending, as much

as anything else, encouraged the one-pot meal.[14]

The contents of her inventory suggest that Beatrice Plummer was adept not only at roasting, frying, and boiling but also at baking, the most difficult branch of cookery. Judging from the grain in the upstairs chamber, the bread which she baked was "maslin," a common type made from a mixture of wheat and other grains, usually rye. She began with the sieves stored nearby, carefully sifting out the coarser pieces of grain and bran. Soon after supper, she could have mixed the "sponge," a thin dough made from warm water, yeast, and flour. Her yeast might have come from the foamy "barm" found on top of fermenting ale or beer, from a piece of dough saved from an earlier baking, or even from the crevices in an unwashed kneading trough. Like firebuilding, bread-making was based upon a self-perpetuating chain, an organic sequence which if once interrupted was difficult to begin again. Warmth from the banked fire would raise the sponge by morning when Beatrice could work in more flour, knead the finished dough, and shape the loaves, leaving them to rise again.

Even in twentieth-century kitchens with standardized yeast and thermostatically controlled temperatures, bread dough is subject to wide variations in consistency and behavior. In a drafty house with an uncertain supply of yeast, breadmaking was indeed "an art, craft, and

mystery." Not the least of the problem was regulating the fire so that the oven was ready at the same time as the risen loaves. Small cakes or biscuits could be baked in a skillet or directly on the hearth under an upside-down pot covered with coals. But to produce bread in any quantity required an oven. Before 1650, these were frequently constructed in dooryards, but in the last decades of the century they were built into the rear of the kitchen fireplace, as Beatrice Plummer's must have been. Since her oven would have had no flue, she would have left the door open once she kindled a fire inside, allowing the smoke to escape through the fireplace chimney. Moving about her kitchen, she would have kept an eye on this fire, occasionally raking the coals to distribute the heat evenly, testing periodically with her hand to see if the oven had reached the right temperature. When she determined that it had, she would have scraped out the coals and inserted the bread--assuming that it had risen enough by this time or had not risen too much and collapsed waiting for the oven to heat.[16]

Cooking and baking were year-round tasks. Inserted into these day-by-day routines were seasonal specialties which allowed a housewife to bridge the dearth of one period with the bounty of another. In the preservation calendar, dairying came first, beginning with the first calves of

early spring. In colonial New England cows were all-purpose creatures, raised for meat as well as for milk. Even in new settlements, they could survive by browsing on rough land; their meat was a hedge against famine. But only in areas with abundant meadow (and even there only in certain months) would they produce milk with sufficient butter fat for serious dairying.-[17] Newbury was such a place.

We can imagine Beatrice Plummer some morning in early summer processing the milk which would appear as cheese in a January breakfast. Slowly she heated several gallons with rennet dried and saved from the autumn's slaughtering. Within an hour or two the curd had formed. She broke it, drained off the whey, then worked in a little of her own fresh butter. Packing this rich mixture into a mold, she turned it in her wooden press for an hour or more, changing and washing the cheesecloth frequently as the whey dripped out. Repacking it in dry cloth, she left it in the press for another thirty to forty hours before washing it once more with whey, drying it, and placing it in the cellar or dairy house to age. As a young girl, she would have learned from her mother or a mistress the importance of thorough pressing and the virtues of cleanliness. She may also have acquired some of the many English proverbs associated with dairying. Taking her finished mound to the powdering tub for a light dusting, she perhaps recalled that "much

saltiness in white meat is ill for the stone." [18]

The Plummer inventory gives little evidence of the second stage of preservation in the housewife's year, the season of gardening and gathering which followed quickly upon the dairy months. But there is ample evidence of the autumn slaughtering. Beatrice could well have killed the smaller pigs herself, holding their "hinder parts between her legs," as one observer described the process, "and taking the snout in her left hand" while she stuck the animal through the heart with a long knife. Once the bleeding stopped, she would have submerged the pig in boiling water for a few minutes, then rubbed it with rosen, stripped off the hair, and disemboweled it. Nothing was lost. She reserved the organ meats for immediate use, then cleaned the intestines for later service as sausage casings. Stuffed with meat scraps and herbs and smoked, these "links" were a treasured delicacy. The larger cuts could be roasted at once or preserved in several ways. With wine, ginger, mace, and nutmeg, pork could be rolled into a cloth and pickled as "souse." But this was an expensive--and risky--method. Beatrice relied on more common techniques. She submerged some of her pork in brine, trusting the high salt concentration and the low temperature in the dairy house to keep it untainted. She processed the rest as bacon. Each "flitch" stood in salt for two or three weeks

before she hung it from the lug pole of her chimney for smoking-[19] In the Plummer house, "hanging bacon" must have been a recurring ritual of early winter.

Fall was also the season for cider-making. The mildly alcoholic beverage produced by natural fermentation of apple juice was a staple of the New England diet and was practically the only method of preserving the fruit harvest. With the addition of sugar, the alcoholic content could be raised from five to about seven percent, as it usually was in taverns and for export. The cider in the Plummer house was probably the common farm variety. In early winter, the amber juice of autumn sat hissing and bubbling in the cellar in the most active stage of fermentation, a process which came to be described poetically as the "singing of the cider." [20]

Prosaic beer was even more important to the Plummer diet. Although some housewives brewed a winter's supply of strong beer in October, storing it in the cellar, Beatrice seems to have been content with "small beer," a mild beverage usually brewed weekly or bi-weekly and used almost at once. Malting--the process of sprouting and drying barley to increase its sugar content--was wisely left to the village expert. Beatrice started with cracked malt or grist, processing her beer in three stages. "Mashing" required slow steeping at just below the boiling point, a

sensitive and smelly process which largely determined the success of the beverage. Experienced brewers knew by taste whether the enzymes were working. If it was too hot, acetic acid developed which would sour the finished product. The next stage, "brewing," was relatively simple. Herbs and hops were boiled with the malted liquid. In the final step, this liquor was cooled and mixed with yeast saved from last week's beer or bread. Within twenty-four hours--if all had gone well--the beer was bubbling actively.[21]

All that we know of Beatrice Plummer of Newbury reveals her as a woman who took pride in huswifery. A wife who knew how to manage the ticklish chemical processes which changed milk into cheese, meal into bread, malt into beer, and flesh into bacon, was a valuable asset to a man, as Francis Plummer knew. But not long after his death, Beatrice married a man who did not appreciate her skills. To put it bluntly, he seems to have preferred her property. Like Francis Plummer before him, Edmund Berry had signed a prenuptial contract allowing Beatrice to retain ownership of the estate she had inherited from her previous husband. Edmund regretted his decision and began to hound Beatrice to tear up the paper.

The strategy which Edmund used was wonderfully calculated. Not only did he refuse to provide Beatrice with provisions, he denied her the right to perform her

housewifely magic upon them. "Forr such was & still is his absurd manner in eating his victualls, as takeing his meat out of ye pickle: & broyleing it upon ye coales, & this he would tell me I must eate or else I must fast," she told the Salem Quarterly Court in June of 1677. Beatrice had lived peacefully with two husbands, as one neighbor testified, but in old age she had wedded a man who preferred her estate to her cooking. He said she shculd have nothing of him because he had nothing of hers, and he told cne neighbor he did not care if "there were a fire in the south field and she in the middle of it." Berry was fined for his "abusive carriages and speeches."

What is really interesting about this case is not the ill-temper of the husband but the humiliation of the wife, who obviously found herself in a sitration for which she was unprepared, despite the experience of two previous marriages. Legally, Beatrice had every right to hold fast to her dower, as Edmund Berry knew. The real issue, however, was not law but custom. Berry simply refused to play by the rules as his wife understood them. She offered to help him "wind his quills" (like his predecessor, he was a weaver), and she brought him "a cup of my owne Sugar & beare" and drank to him saying, "Come husband lett all former differences be buried & trod under Foote." But he only replied, "Thou old cheating Rogue." [22] Neither the

services of a deputy husband nor the ministrations of a wife could salve his distemper, but Beatrice's loss is history's gain. The tumult which thrust her into court gives life to the assemblage of objects found in her Newbury kitchen, and it helps to document the central position of huswifery in the self-definition of one northern New England woman.

* * *

Beatrice Plummer represents one type of early American housewife. Hannah Grafton represents another.[23] Chronology, geography, and personal biography created differences between the household inventories of the two women, but there are obvious similarities as well. Like Beatrice Plummer, Hannah Grafton lived in a house with two major rooms on the ground floor and two chambers above. At various locations near the ground floor rooms were service areas--a washhouse with its own loft or chamber, a shop, a leanto, and two cellars. The central rooms in the Grafton house were the "parlour," with the expected feather bed, and the "kitchen," which included such the same collection of utensils and iron pots which appeared in the Plummer house. Standing in the corner of the kitchen were a spade and a hoe, two implements useful only for chipping away ice and snow on the December day on which the inventory was taken, though apparently destined for another purpose come spring. With a garden, a cow, and three pigs, Hannah Grafton clearly

had agricultural responsibilities, but these were performed in a strikingly different context than on the Plummer farm. The Grafton homeplot was a single acre of land standing just a few feet from shoreline in the urban center of Salem.[24]

Joshua Grafton was a mariner like his father before him. His estate of 236 pounds was modest, but he was still a young man and he had firm connections with the seafaring elite who were transforming the economy of Salem. When he died late in 1699, Hannah had three living children--Hannah, eight; Joshua, six; and Priscilla, who was just ten months.[25] This young family used their space quite differently than had the Plummers. The upstairs chambers which served as storage areas in the Newbury farmhouse were sleeping quarters here. In addition to the bed in the parlor and the cradle in the kitchen, there were two beds in each of the upstairs rooms. One of these, designated as "smaller," may have been used by young Joshua. It would be interesting to know whether the mother carried the two chamber pots kept in the parlour upstairs to the bedrooms at night or whether the children found their way in the dark to their parents' sides as necessity demanded. But adults were probably never far away. Because there are more bedsteads in the Grafton house than members of the immediate family, they may have shared their living quarters with unmarried relatives or servants.

Ten chairs and two stools furnished the kitchen while no fewer than fifteen chairs, in two separate sets crowded the parlour with its curtained bed. The presence of a punch bowl on a square table in the parlour reinforces the notion that sociability was an important value in this Salem household. Thirteen ounces of plate, a pair of gold buttons, and a silver headed cane suggest a measure of luxury as well--all of this in stark contrast to the Plummers, who had only two chairs and a backless bench and no discernible ornamentation at all. Yet the Grafton house was only slightly more specialized than the Newbury farmhouse. It had no discernible servants' quarters, no sharp segregation of public and private spaces, no real separation of sleeping, eating, and work. A cradle in the kitchen and a go-cart kept with the spinning wheels in the upstairs chamber show that little Priscilla was very much a part of this workaday world.

How then might the pattern of Hannah Grafton's work have differed from that of Beatrice Plummer? Certainly cooking remained central. Hannah's menus probably varied only slightly from those prepared in the Plummer kitchen, and her cooking techniques must have been identical. But there is one dramatic difference apparent in the two inventories. The Grafton house contained no provisions worth listing on that December day when Isaac Foot and

Samuel Willard appeared to take inventory. Hannah had brewing vessels, but no malt; sieves and a meal trough, but no grain; and a cow, but no cheese. What little milk her cow gave in winter probably went directly into the children's mugs. Perhaps she would continue to breastfeed Priscilla until spring brought a more secure supply. In summer, she might make a little cottage cheese or at harvest curdle some rich milk with wine or ale for a "posset," but she would have no surplus to process as butter or cheese. Her orchard would produce fresh apples for pie or puffs for autumn supper, but little extra for the cellar. Her three pigs might eventually appear, salted, in the empty barrels stored in the house, but as yet they represented only the hope of bacon. Trade, rather than manufacturing or agriculture, was the dominant motif in her meal preparations.

In colonial New England most food went directly from processor or producer to consumer. Joshua may have purchased grain or flour from the mill near the shipbuilding center called "Knocker's Hole," about a mile away from their house. Or Hannah may have eschewed breadmaking altogether, walking or sending a servant the half mile to Elizabeth Haskett's bakery near the North River. Fresh meat for the spits in her washhouse may have come from John Cromwell's slaughter house on Main Street near the congregational

meeting house and soap for her washtubs from the soapboiler further up the street near the Quaker meeting house.[26] Salem, like other colonial towns, was layed out helter-skelter, with the residences of the wealthy interspersed with the small houses of carpenters or fishermen. Because there was no center of retail trade, assembling the ingredients of a dinner involved many transactions. Sugar, wine, and spices came by sea; fresh lamb, veal, eggs, butter, gooseberries, and parsnips came by land. Merchants retailed their goods in shops or warehouses near their wharves and houses. Farmers or their wives often hawked their produce door to door.[27] Salem had a charter for a fair, remarked one English traveler, "but it begins like Ingerstone Market, half a Hour after eleven a Clock, and Ends half an Hour before Twelve.[28]

In such a setting trading for food might require as much energy and skill as manufacturing or growing it. One key to success was simply knowing where to go. Keeping abreast of the arrival of ships in the harbor or establishing personal contact with just the right farmwife from nearby Salem village required time and attention. Equally important was the ability to evaluate the variety of unstandardized goods offered. An apparently sound cheese might teem with maggots when cut.[29] Since cash was scarce, a third necessity was the establishment of credit, a

problem which ultimately devolved upon husbands. But petty haggling over direct exchanges was also a feature of this barter economy.

Hannah Grafton was involved in trade on more than one level. The "shop" attached to her house was not the all-purpose storage shed and workroom it seems to have been for Francis Plummer. It was a retail store, offering door locks, nails, hammers, gimlets and other hardware as well as English cloth, pins, needles, and thread. As a mariner, Joshua Grafton may well have sailed the ship which brought these goods to Salem. In his absence, Hannah was not only a mother and a housewife, but like many other Salem women she was a shopkeeper as well.

There is another highly visible activity in the Grafton inventory which was not immediately apparent in the Plummer's--care of clothing. Presumably, Beatrice Plummer washed occasionally, but she did not have a "washhouse." Hannah did. The arrangement of this unusual room is far from clear. On December 2, 1699 it contained two spits, two "bouldishes," a gridiron, and "other things." Whether those other things included wash tubs, soap, or a beating staff is impossible to determine. In a seaport town, a building with a fire for heating rinse water, boiling laundry, and drying clothes could have been the base for a thriving home industry. But there is no evidence of this in the Grafton

inventory. Like the "butteries" and "dairies" which appear in other New England houses, this room may have retained a specialized English name while actually functioning as a multipurpose storage and service room.[30] With its spits and gridiron, Hannah Grafton's "washhouse" may have served as an extra cooking space, perhaps on occasions when all fifteen chairs in the parlour were filled.

But on any morning in December it could also have been hung with the family wash. Dark woolen jackets and petticoats went from year to year without seeing a kettle of suds, but linen shifts, aprons, shirts, and handkerchiefs required washing. Laundering might not have been a weekly affair in most colonial households, but it was a well-defined if infrequent necessity even for transient seamen and laborers. One can only speculate on its frequency in a house with a child under a year. When her baby was only a few months old, Hannah may have learned to hold little Priscilla over the chamber pot at frequent intervals, but in early infancy, tightly wrapped in her cradle, the baby could easily have used five dozen "clouts" and almost as many "belly bands" from one washing to another. With her first child Hannah would have discovered, if her mother had not already told her, that frequent washings and regular boiling helped to prevent open sores and sleepless nights. Even with the use of a "pilch," a

thick square of flannel securely bound over the diaper, blankets and coverlets occasionally needed sudsing as well. A woman with a "washhouse" was not likely to redry unwashed diapers and bedding before the fire.[31]

Joshua's shirts and her own aprons and shifts would require careful ironing as well. Hannah's "smoothing irons" fit into their own heaters which she filled with coals from the fire. As the embers waned and the irons cooled, Hannah made frequent trips from her table to the hearth to the fire and back to the table again. At least two of these heavy instruments were essential. A dampened iron could dry and wrinkle while a single flat iron replenished its heat.[32]

As frequent a task as washing was sewing. Joshua's coats and breeches went to a tailor, but his shirts were probably made at home. Certainly Hannah stitched and unstitched the tucks which altered Priscilla's simple gowns and petticoats as she grew. The little dresses which the baby trailed in her go-cart had once clothed her brother. Gender identity in childhood was less important in this society than economy of effort. It was not that boys were seen as identical to girls, only that all-purpose garments could be handed from one child to another regardless of sex, and dresses were more easily altered than breeches and more adaptable to diapering and toileting. At eight years of age, little Hannah had probably begun to imitate her

mother's even stitches, helping with the continual mending, altering, and knitting which kept this growing family clothed.[33]

In some ways the most interesting items in the Grafton inventory are the two spinning wheels kept in the upstairs chamber. With twenty-five sheep in the fold and a loom in the shed, Beatrice Plummer's wheel and reel had been key components in an intricate production chain. Not so in Salem. Children--not sheep--put wheels in Hannah Grafton's house. The mechanical nature of spinning made it a perfect occupation for women whose serious attention was engrossed by the care or training of their children.[34] This is one reason why the ownership of wheels in both York and Essex Counties had a constancy over time unrelated to the ownership of sheep or looms. In the dozen inventories taken in urban Salem about the time of Joshua Grafton's death, the six non-spinners averaged one minor child each, the six spinners had almost four. Instruction at the wheel was part of the almost ritualistic preparation mothers offered their daughters.[35] Spinning was a useful craft, easily picked up, easily put down, and even small quantities of yarn could be knitted into caps, stockings, bags, and mittens.

Unfortunately, there is no documented event in Hannah Grafton's life corresponding to Beatrice Plummer's colorful appearance in court. But a cluster of objects in the

chamber over her kitchen suggests a fanciful, but by no means improbable, vignette. Imagine her gathered with her two daughters in this upstairs room on a wintry New England day. Little Priscilla navigates around the end of the bedstead in her go-cart while her mother sits at one spinning wheel and her sister at the other. Young Hannah is spinning "oakum," the coarsest and least expensive part of the flax. As her mother leans over to help her wind the uneven thread on the bobbin, she catches a troublesome scent from downstairs. Have the turnips caught on the bottom of the pot? Has the maid scorched Joshua's best shirt? Or has a family servant returned from the wharf and spread his wet clothes by the fire? Hastening down the narrow stairs to the kitchen, Hannah hears the shop bell ring. Just then little Priscilla, left upstairs with her sister, begins to cry. In such pivotal but unrecorded moments much of the history of women lies hidden.

* * *

The third inventory can be more quickly described.[36] Elias Wear of York, Maine left an estate totalling ninety-two pounds, of which less than seven pounds was in household goods--including some old pewter, a pot, two bedsteads, bedding, one chest, and a box. Wear also owned a saddle, three guns, and a river craft called a gundalow. But his wealth, such as it was, consisted of land

(forty pounds) and livestock (thirty-six pounds). It is not just relative poverty which distinguished Elias Wear's inventory from those of Joshua Grafton or Francis Plummer. Every settlement in northern New England had men who owned only a pot, a bed, and a chest. Their children crowded in with them or slept on straw. These men and their sons provided some of the labor which harvested barley for farmers like Francis Plummer or stepped masts for mariners like Joshua Grafton. Their wives and their daughters carded wool or kneaded bread in other women's kitchens. No, Elias Wear was distinguished by a special sort of frontier poverty.

His father had come to northern New England in the 1640's, exploring and trading for furs as far inland in New Hampshire as Lake Winnepesaukee. By 1650 he had settled in York, a then hopeful site for establishing a patrimony. Forty years later he died in the York Massacre, an assault of French and Indians which virtually destroyed the town, bringing death or captivity to full half of the inhabitants.[37] Almost continuous warfare between 1689 and 1713 created prosperity for the merchant community of Portsmouth and Kittery, but it kept most of the inhabitants of outlying settlements in a state of impecunious security.[38]

In 1696, established on a small homestead in the same neighborhood in which his father had been killed, Elias Wear married a young widow with the fitting name of Magdalen. When their first child was born "too soon," the couple found themselves in York County Court owning a presentment for fornication. Although New England courts were still sentencing couples in similar circumstances to "nine stripes a piece upon the Naked back," most of the defendants, like the Wears, managed to pay the not-inconsequential fine. The fifty-nine shillings which Elias and Magdalen pledged the court amounted to almost half of the total value of two steers. A presentment for fornication was expensive as well as inconvenient. But, it did not carry a permanent onus. Within seven years of their conviction, Elias was himself serving on the "Jury of Tryalls" for the county, while Magdalen had proved herself a dutiful and productive wife.[39]

Every other winter she gave birth, producing four sons--Elias, Jeremiah, John, and Joseph--in addition to the untimely Ruth. A sixth child, Mary, was just five months old when her father met his own death by Indians in August of 1707 while traveling between their Cape Neddick home and the more densely settled York village-[40] Without the benefits of a cradle, a go-cart, a spinning wheel, or even a secure supply of grain, Magdalen raised these six children.

Unfortunately, there is little in her inventory and nothing in any other record to document the specific strategies which she used, though the general circumstances of her life can be imagined.

Chopping and hauling for a local timber merchant, Elias could have filled Magdalen's porridge pot with grain shipped from the ports of Salem or Boston. During the spring corn famine, an almost yearly occurrence on the Maine frontier, she might have gone herself with other wives of her settlement to dig on the clam flats, hedging against the day when relief would come by sea.[41] Like Beatrice Plummer and Hannah Grafton, she would have spent some hours cooking, washing, hoeing cabbages, bargaining with neighbors, and in season herding and milking a cow. But poverty, short summers, and rough land also made gathering an essential part of her work. We may imagine her cutting pine splinters for light and "cattails" and "silkgrass" for beds. Long before her small garden began to produce, she would have searched out a wild "sallet" in the nearby woods, in summer turning to streams and barrens for other delicacies congenial to English taste--eels, salmon, berries, and plums. She would have embarked on such excursions with caution, however, remembering the wives of nearby Exeter who took their children into the woods for strawberries "without any Guard" and narrowly avoided capture.[42]

Frontier danger drew scattered families together, sometimes compressing an entire neighborhood into a designated "garrison" for days at a time. Near sawmills, these structures were sometimes true garrisons, fortified houses constructed of machine-smoothed timbers laid edge to edge. Just as often they were simply the largest or most substantial dwellings in each settlement.[43] Women like Magdalen Wear went to the doors of these same houses in times of peace, asking to borrow malt or offering to spin for a day.

Only the most prosperous families of Maine and New Hampshire built according to the parlor-hall houseplan which was becoming typical of Essex County by the end of the seventeenth century. The Wears probably lived in a single-story cottage which may or may not have been subdivided into more than one room. A loft above provided extra space for storage or sleeping. With the addition of a leanto, this house could have sheltered animals as well as humans, especially in harsh weather or in periods of Indian alarm. Housing a pig or a calf in the next room would have simplified Magdalen's chore's in the winter. If she managed to raise a few chickens, these too would have thrived better near the kitchen fire.[44]

Thus, penury erased the elaborate demarcation of "houses" and "yards" evident in yeoman inventories. It also blurred distinctions between the work of a husbandman and the work of his wife. At planting time and at harvest, Magdalen Wear undoubtedly went into the fields to help Elias, taking her babies with her or leaving Ruth to watch them as best she could.[45] A century later an elderly Maine woman bragged that she "had dropped corn many a day with two governors: a judge in her arms and a general on her back." [46] None of the Wear children grew up to such prominence, but all six of them survived to adulthood and four married and founded families of their own. Six children did not prevent Magdalen Wear from remarrying within two years of her husband's death. Whatever her assets--a pleasant face, a strong back, or life-time possession forty pounds in land--she was soon wed to the unmarried son of a neighboring mill owner.[47]

* * *

Magdalen Wear, Hannah Grafton, and Beatrice Plummer were all "typical" New England housewives of the period 1650-1750. Magdalen's iron pot represents the housekeeping minimum which often characterized frontier life. Hannah's punch bowl and her hardware shop exemplify both the commerce and the self-conscious civilization of coastal towns. Beatrice's brewing tubs and churn epitomize home

manufacturing and agrarian self-sufficiency as they existed in established villages. Each type of housekeeping could be found somewhere in northern New England in any decade of the century. Yet these three women should not be placed in rigidly separate categories. Wealth, geography, occupation, and age determined that some women in any decade would be more heavily involved in one aspect of housekeeping than another, yet all three women shared a common vocation. Each understood the rhythms of the seasons, the technology of firebuilding, the persistence of the daily demands of cooking, the complexity of home production, and the dexterity demanded from the often conflicting roles of housekeeper, mother, and wife.

The thing which distinguished these women from their counterparts in modern America was not, as some historians have suggested, that their work was essential to survival. "Survival," after all, is a minimal concept. Individual men and women have never needed each other for mere survival, but for far more complex reasons, and women were essential in the seventeenth century for the very same reasons they are essential today--for the perpetuation of the race. As the Indians and Edmund Berry knew, English husbands could live without cheese and beer. Nor was it the monotony of these women's lives or the narrowness of their choices which really set them apart. Women in industrial cities have

lived monotonous and confining lives, and they may have worked even harder than early American women. The really striking differences are social.

In this brief exploration of work, we have merely hinted at the social setting in which work occurred. We have noted the intervention of Beatrice Plummer's neighbors in her conflicts with her husband, the importance of children in the household of Hannah Grafton, and the blurring of gender boundaries in the frontier environment of Magdalen Wear. In later chapters these patterns will be elaborated. Here we can simply assert that the lives of early American housewives were distinguished less by the tasks they performed than by forms of social organization which linked economic responsibilities to family responsibilities and which tied each woman's household to the larger world of her village or town.

For centuries, the industrious Bathsheba has been pictured sitting at a spinning wheel—"She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." Perhaps it is time to suggest a new icon for women's history. Certainly spinning was an important female craft in northern New England, linked not only to housework but to mothering, but it was one enterprise among many. Spinning wheels are such intriguing and picturesque objects, so resonant with antiquity, that they tend to obscure rather than clarify the

nature of female economic life, making home production the essential element in early American huswifery and the era of industrialization the period of crucial change. Challenging the symbolism of the wheel not only undermines the popular stereotype, it questions a prevailing emphasis in women's history.

An alternate symbol might be the pocket. In early America, a woman's pocket was not attached to her clothing, but tied around her waist with a string or tape. (When "Lucy Locket lost her pocket, Kitty Fisher found it.") A slit in the seam of her petticoat or gown would allow her to wear it inside as well as outside her clothing. Much better than a spinning wheel, this homely object symbolizes the obscurity, the diversity, and the personal nature of women's work. A woman sat at a wheel, but she carried her pocket with her from room to room, from house to yard, from yard to street. The items which it contained would shift from day to day and from year to year, but they would of necessity be small, easily lost, yet essential--knitting needles and a hank of yarn, a comb, a bit of spice or ribbon to trade with a neighbor, an undarned sock or unfinished cap, and her household keys. A pocket could be a mended and patched pouch of plain homespun or a rich personal ornament boldly embroidered in crewel. It reflected the status as well as the skills of its owner. Taking keys from her pocket, a

housewife might unlock a cellar filled with salt meat and cider, a great court cupboard graced with silver porringers and goblets, a box with the family Bible, an upstairs chamber stored with grain, or simply a crude pine chest kept at the foot of her bed.

A housewife's keys had symbolic importance in and of themselves because they reflected authority. Significantly, an argument between a Haverhill man and his wife broke out when he refused to return the cellar key after pouring a drink of cider for a friend.[48] The possession of keys ratified the position of a woman within her own domain, but the very need for those keys points to a crucial difference between family life in the past and the present. Early American families not only barred their doors against intrusion from the outside, but they locked cupboards, chests, boxes, cellars, and chambers against threats from within. When a Portsmouth maid managed to slip her mistress's keys from her petticoats after she had gone to bed, she was able to steal stockings, a piece of nutmeg, and several shillings which she traded or gave away to friends.[49]

Work was less important, then, than the social setting within which work was performed. Whether a housewife's pocket contained many keys or none, whether it held a baby's bib or a Testament, a silver bodkin or a midwife's shears, a

wisp of hair or a paper of pins, it characterized the dependence and the remarkable versatility of her role.

1. The description in the next few paragraphs is a summary based on a wide variety of sources, many of which are referred to in the detailed discussion which follows.
2. The Merrimack Valley Textile Museum exhibit on hand production of cloth includes pictures, descriptions, or live demonstrations of the eleven tasks: sheep raising, shearing, sorting, scouring, picking, carding, spinning, weaving, fulling, napping, and shearing. The museum is in North Andover, Massachusetts.
3. For an example of community concern about sheep grazing, see George Wingate Chase, The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts (Haverhill, 1861) p. 146. For hired spinning and carding see MPCR, IV, 47 and Essex Files, VIII, 277.
4. Grace Rogers Cooper, The Ccpp Family Textiles, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971) p. 52-53.
5. The last chapter of Proverbs was a staple of Puritan sermons both in England and America. Notable examples are John Dod and William Hinde, Bathshebaes Instructions to Her Son Lemuel (London, 1614) and Cotton Mather, Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion, or the Character and Happiness of a Virtuous Woman (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1692). Mather explicitly mentioned Bathsheba's earlier career: "How free, how rich is the Grace of God unto Repenting Sinners! Bathshebah after a very scandalous Fall, becomes a very eminent Saint, yea, a Prophetess of the Lord." p. 7. Lonna Malmsheimer has noted the use of this prototype by ministers later in the eighteenth century, in "Daughters of Zion: New England Roots of American Feminism," New England Quarterly, (September 1977) p. 492.
6. William H. Chafe, Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 17; Mary P. Ryan, Womanhood In America From Colonial Times To The Present (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), p. 30; Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), pp. 53-54; and Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds Of Womanhood (New Haven and London: Yale

University Press, 1977), p. 21 all stress agrarian self-sufficiency as a backdrop to nineteenth-century changes.

7. Unless otherwise noted the information in the following section comes from the will and probate inventory of Francis Plummer of Newbury, Massachusetts. The Probate Records of Essex County, (Salem, Mass: The Essex Institute, 1916-1920), II, 319-322.
8. Joshua Coffin, A Sketch of the History of Newbury, Newburyport, and West Newbury, (Hampton, New Hampshire: Peter E. Randall, 1977, 1845), p. 315.
9. Abbott Lowell Cummings, The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1979) pp. 31-32.
10. Cummings, Framed Houses, pp. 29-31 describes the complex evolution of service rooms in New England houses. Generally, New Englanders abandoned the ground surface "butteries" of English houses for submerged cellars, which were apparently more reliable in the temperature extremes of Massachusetts.
11. Other Newbury families did use corn, however. In fact the local miller, John Emery, ate "Samp," a kind of corn porridge. Essex Files, III, 50 and Coffin, Newbury, p. 43. Anderson, "Solid Sufficiency," describes the range of "spoon meats" in the English diet, including flummery, which could be made from wheat as well as oats. The daughter of an Ipswich woman described her craving for oatmeal during a season of dearth in Connecticut in 1660. Winthrop Papers, III, 97.
12. Anderson, "A Solid Sufficiency," p. 263-270 gives hypothetical menus derived from his study of the English yeoman food system in the seventeenth-century. Although more elaborate, these harmonize remarkably with the description of country eating in northern New England in the middle of the eighteenth-century which appeared in the childhood reminiscences of an anonymous man as "Manners and Customs of Olden Time," NHHS Col.

V (1837), pp. 225-226. The menus described are taken from these two sources.

13. quoted in Anderson, "Solid Sufficiency," p. 232.
14. Cummings, Framed Houses, p. 4, 120-122; Anderson, "Solid Sufficiency," p. 157; Jane Carson, Colonial Virginia Cookery, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968) p. 104; Frances Phipps, Colonial Kitchens: Their Furnishings, and Their Gardens, (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1972) p. 94 ff.
15. Anderson, "Solid Sufficiency," p. 171-172; Carson, Colonial Virginia Cookery, p. 106.
16. Carson, Colonial Virginia Cookery, p. 104-105.
17. On the seasonal nature of dairying, see Anderson, "Solid Sufficiency," pp. 63, 65, 118 and Howard S. Russell, A Long, Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1976), p. 160. The anonymous author of "Manners and Customs" said few farm families had milk in winter.
18. Recipes and proverbs appear in Anderson, "Solid Sufficiency," 120-132.
19. Anderson, "Solid Sufficiency," pp. 99-108.
20. Sanborn C. Brown, Wines & Beers of Old New England, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1978), pp. 87-97.
21. Brown, Wines & Beers, 50-63, 70-77; Anderson, "Solid Sufficiency," 89-98.
22. Essex Files, IV, 194-195, 297-298.

23. Essex County Probate Records, 307:58-59.
24. "Part of Salem in 1700," pocket map in James Duncan Phillips, Salem In The Seventeenth Century, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933), H-6.
25. Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, (Salem, 1924) I, 435, 441.
26. Phillips, Salem In The Seventeenth Century, 328, 314, 318, 317, and Phillips, Salem In The Eighteenth Century, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937) p. 20-21. For exact locations, see map in volume I.
27. The nature of petty trade in colonial America is largely unstudied. I have relied on Karen Friedman, "Victualling Colonial Boston," Ag. Hist. 47 (July 1973), 189-205, and suggestive glimpses in Benjamin Coleman, Some Reasons and Arguments Offered to the Good People of Boston and adjacent Places, For The setting up Markets In Boston (Boston, 1719), pp. 5-9.
28. Phillips, Salem In The Eighteenth Century, 25, quoting Edward Ward, 1699.
29. One of the accusations against a Salem witch was that she sold maggoty cheese, see the case of Mary Bradbury in The Salem Witchcraft Papers, ed. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, (New York: La Capo Press, 1977) p. 117-129.
30. Cummings, Framed Houses, p. 29-31.
31. "Washing and diet" are often grouped in charges for boarders, e.g. MECH, IV, 205-6. The frequency of washing is difficult to determine from scattered references, though a maid in one New Hampshire house testified to having made a pair of linen sleeves in April which were stolen from the wash line in May, NH Court Papers, IV, 237. There is a description of infant's clothing based upon prescriptive literature in Claire Elizabeth Fox, "Pregnancy, Childbirth and Early Infancy In Anglo-American Culture: 1675-1830," (Ph.D.

- Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1966), pp. 240-245. A rare list of a layette is found in Essex County Probate, 321: 96. It includes 57 clouts, 27 caps, 2 headbands, one swather, 50 belly bands and bibs, and six shirts. The requirements for diapers and shirts are almost identical to those suggested for twentieth century babies in Benjamin Spock, Baby and Child Care, (New York: Pocket Books, 1976) p. 60-61.
32. Susan Burrows Swan, Plain & Fancy: American Women and Their Needlework, 1700-1850, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977), p. 38.
 33. Swan, Plain & Fancy, 18-19, 34-35.
 34. Alice Clark, Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century, (London & New York: 1919) p. 95.
 35. In 1672, Samuel Sewall, then of Newbury, wrote to a friend that his little sister Betty "can Read, and Spin passing well; Things (Me saltem Judice) very desirable in a Woman." "Letter-Book of Samuel Sewall," CMHS, Sixth Series, I (Boston: 1886) 19. Spinning wheels were staple equipment in traditional dame schools as a number of engravings show. Lucy Larcom, A New England Childhood, (reprint Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973), p. 43 recalls "Aunt Hannah," her teacher, spinning at her flax wheel and singing hymns as the children worked.
 36. York County Probate Records II:26.
 37. NLD, 727.
 38. Charles Clark, The Eastern Frontier, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 67-72.
 39. MPCB, IV: 91-92; 175, 176, 206, 263, 307, 310.
 40. NLD, 726.

41. For the Scarcity of grain on the frontier, see the many letters in Col. Maine Hist. Soc. IX, e.g. pp. 58-59, 457, 466; the "Letter-Book of Samuel Sewall," 126, 165, 182-184, 186, 189; Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith---, ed. Wm. Willis, (1849), pp. 85, 86, 87, 88, 96. May 4, 1740, Smith wrote: "Pretty many families on the Penobscot live wholly on the clam banks."

42. Cotton Mather, Decennium Luctuosum: An History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Long War, which New-England hath had with the Indian Savages, (Boston, 1699), reprinted in Charles H. Lincoln, ed. Narratives of the Indian Wars, (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1913), p. 266-7.

43. Richard M. Candee, "Wooden Buildings In Early Maine and New Hampshire: A Technological and Cultural History 1600-1720," Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1976, pp. 255ff.

44. Candee, "Wooden Buildings," pp. 18, 42-48. Secondary accounts have not discussed the sharing of shelter with animals, but there are some tantalizing hints in the sources, e.g. Josselyn, Two Voyages, p. 193 on chickens fed under the kitchen table in rainy weather; Essex Files, IV, 159, on "goeing into the other roome to give my piggs corne,"; and Saltonstall Papers, I, 219, on being "billeted" with "ould Jersey" during Indian troubles.

45. The Rev. John Pike noted that "The Indians killed Henry Barns, Edward Hammonds & his wife, as they were at work in a field at Spruce-Creek" in Kittery. Proc. MHS (Boston 1876) p. 129. Other evidence of wives and young women helping with planting, herding, and harvesting appears in Essex Files, II, 372-373; 22; 442; and in Diary of Matthew Patten, p. 6, 11, 19, 68, 84, 129, and 141. There is no indication that Mrs. Patten worked in the field, but Patten regularly hired married women, presumably wives of less prosperous neighbors. Fussell, The English Countrywoman, p. 95-96, says that the wives of poor husbandmen helped with the corn and hay harvest, sometimes with ploughing, and in Sussex and Norfolk with shearing as well. Magdalen Wear's mother had come from Norfolk. NLD, 500.

46. Sarah Orne Jewett, The Old Town of Berwick (Berwick, Maine: Old Berwick Historical Society, 1967), n. pag. Jewett was quoting a local story about Margery Sullivan, whose son John became governor of New Hampshire and whose son James became governor of Massachusetts.
47. NLD, pp. 726, 729.
48. Essex Files, VIII, 272-273.
49. New Hampshire Court Papers, I:2, 427-428.

Table I-1

Some Indicators of Agriculture and Home Manufacturing in Household Inventories, Essex and York Counties, 1670, 1700, 1730

<u>Total Inventories</u>	<u>1670[1]</u>	<u>1700[2]</u>	<u>1730[3]</u>
Essex County	97	95	92
York County	39	41	37

DAIRYINGCOWS

Essex County	77%	64%	57%
York County	73%	79%	84%

Processing Equipment

Essex County	30%	14%	10%
York County	18%	25%	10%

TEXTILESSheep

Essex County	43%	45%	39%
York County	18%	64%	46%

Spinning Wheels

Essex County	38%	46%	38%
York County	21%	46%	40%

Looms

Essex County	4%	6%	13%
York County	0%	2%	3%

Flax

Essex County	8%	12%	18%
York County	0%	10%	13%

PROVISIONS (any type of food, any quantity)

Essex County	56%	26%	32%
York County	37%	53%	30%

1. Taken from The Probate Records of Essex County, (Salem, Mass: 1916-1920), II, 237-432 and Maine Province and Court Records, (Portland, Maine: 1931), II.
2. Book 307, manuscript probate records, Essex County Court House, Salem, Mass. Books I, II, manuscript probate records, York County Court House, Alfred, Maine.
3. Book 321, manuscript probate records, Essex County. Book IV, manuscript probate records, York County.

Table I-2

Comparision Of Selected Items

Urban Salem And Overall Essex County Inventories, 1700[1]

	Cows	Dairy Tools	Sheep	Spin'g Wheels	Swine	Looking Glasses	Pic- tures	Quilts
<u>Salem</u> N=12	33%	0%	16%	50%	41%	75%	25%	15%
<u>Essex</u> N=83	71%	17%	51%	47%	51%	31%	0%	2%

1. The overall Essex County sample was taken from Book 307, manuscript probate records, Essex County Court House, Salem, Mass. The twelve urban inventories drawn from that same source can all be placed on James Duncan Phillips reconstructed map of the center of Salem, 1700. (Salem In The Seventeenth Century, Boston, 1937) In 1700 the town of Salem was still very large geographically and included rural as well as urban neighborhoods. The twelve decedents in this sub-sample obviously belonged to the commercial world of mercantile Salem. They included three mariners, one innkeeper, a tailor, a cooper, a joiner, and two cordwainers. Sidney Perley, History of Salem, I, 306, 435, 441; II, 38, 42, 178, 268, 386, 387; III, 29, 51, 52.

Chapter Two

Deputy Husbands

Many historians have assumed, with Page Smith, that "it was not until the end of the colonial era that the idea of a 'suitable' or 'proper' sphere of feminine activities began to emerge." For fifty years, historians have relied upon the work of Elizabeth A. Dexter, who claimed that there were more "women of affairs" proportionally in eighteenth-century America than in 1900. Colonial newspapers yield evidence of female blacksmiths, silversmiths, tinworkers, shoemakers, shipwrights, tanners, gunsmiths, bakers, printers, and butchers, as well as a great many teachers and shopkeepers. Partly on the basis of such evidence, Richard Morris concluded in his pioneering study of female legal rights that American women in the colonial period attained "a measure of individuality and independence in excess of that of their English sisters." [1]

Recently, however, a few historians have begun to question these assumptions. Mary Beth Norton has carefully studied the claims of 468 loyalist women who were refugees in Great Britain after the American revolution. Only forty-three of these women had ever earned money on their own or even assisted directly in their husband's businesses. As a group, the loyalist women were unable to describe their

family assets, other than household possessions, and they repeatedly described themselves as "helpless" to manage the business thrust upon them. She has concluded that these women were "almost wholly domestic, in the sense that that word would be used in the nineteenth-century United States" but at the same time they lacked the positive self-image which presumably upheld women of that century.[2]

Both groups of historians are right. The pre-modern world did allow for greater fluidity of role behavior than in nineteenth-century America, but colonial women were by definition basically domestic. We can account for both of these conclusions by focusing more closely upon the economic relationship of husband and wife. There is a revealing little anecdote in a deposition recorded in Essex County in 1672. Jacob Barney of Salem had gone to Phillip Cromwell's house to negotiate the marriage of his daughter Hannah. Although both Cromwell and his wife were present, Barney had turned to the husband, expecting, as he said, "to have their minds from him." Cromwell had a severe cold which had impaired his hearing. He simply pointed to his wife and said that whatever she agreed upon, "he would make it good." [3] This incident dramatizes three assumptions basic to family government in the traditional world:

1. The husband was supreme in the external affairs of the family. As the titular head of the family, he had both the right and the responsibility to represent it in its dealings with the outside world.

2. A husband's decisions would, however, incorporate his wife's opinions and interest. (Barney expected to hear their minds from him.)

3. Should fate or circumstance prevent the husband from fulfilling his role, the wife could appropriately stand in his place.

To fully understand these rather simple propositions requires at least a brief exploration of property rights in early America. Legally, the identity of the married woman was subsumed in her husband's. As a feme covert, she could not own property of any kind, with the possible exception of her own clothing. She was unable to sign a contract or write a will, and any money which she earned after marriage became her husband's. Under special circumstances, English law did allow a woman to retain limited economic rights through a prenuptial contract made with a prospective husband, but such contracts were rare and usually limited to women who had been married before. Most wives in early New England experienced the protected dependency of coverture. As married women they were entitled to support for life, but not to independent control of any portion of family

resources-[4]

The classic formulation of the position of women under common law is in William Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England:

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything-[5]

Although Blackstone's commentaries were not published until 1765, the principles which he described were well established not only among professional lawyers in England but among at least some inhabitants of the American frontier. In 1705, Thomas Manning tried to avoid judgment in a Maine court for detaining a chest left with his wife by a boarder. The declaration of the plaintiff was faulty, he said, because it named his wife Elizabeth in the accusation, when "by the Common Law the wife cannot be a detainer but the Husband." [6] Such sophistry had no effect on the Maine judges, who like most colonial magistrates were less concerned with legal niceties than in the protection of life and property. In ruling against Manning, they upheld the intention if not the language of the law. In fact, Blackstone's insistence upon the legal nonentity of women was in part to avoid just such haggling over the separate actions of the two parties in marriage.

For our purposes, however, the important issues have less to do with laws than with the underlying assumptions which laws express. The legal disabilities of colonial women grew out of the primacy of the family as an agent for the support and socialization of children and for the preservation of property. In a very important sense, possession of land, the major source of wealth for most families, was seen as a communal trust rather than an individual privilege. This is well-illustrated in the rights and restrictions associated with a widow's right of "dower." Under English law, a widow was entitled to life-interest in at least one-third of her husband's real estate. Significantly, this "dower right" became binding at the beginning, not at the end of the marriage, which meant a man could not convey clear title to land without his wife's consent lest he alienate her "thirds." The future needs of a wife limited the independence of the husband. But conversely, the claims of the next generation restricted the rights of the widow. Because her interest in the land was for life only, she could neither sell nor bequeath it. At her death it reverted to her husband's heirs.[7]

This system ensured both the secure maintenance of the widow and the orderly transmittal of land from father to son. At the same time, it highlighted the contrasting role expectations of men and women. "Maintenance" and

"inheritance" are two quite different processes. In describing the mentality of pre-industrial America, James Henretta has written: "The lineal family--not the conjugal unit and certainly not the unattached individual--stood at the center of economic and social existence in northern agricultural society." [8] Yet a truly lineal family is a male family, as any genealogist knows. Female lines of descent play hopscotch through the vital records of colonial America, challenging purely male perceptions of "economic and social existence." Women were essential to the perpetration of farms and names, but in fundamental ways they stood outside the patriarchal order which Henretta describes, even though they were dependent upon it.

On one level, this is clear evidence of inequality. But on another, it points toward a world of women almost totally unexplored in standard history. The fact of dependency can be interpreted in more than one way. To use an imperfect but nonetheless suggestive analogy, colonial wives were dependent upon patriarchal families in somewhat the same way seventeenth-century ministers were dependent upon their congregations or twentieth-century engineers are dependent upon their companies. That is, they owned neither their place of employment nor even the tools of their trade. No matter how diligently they worked, they did not expect to inherit the land upon which they lived any more than a

minister expected to inherit his meetinghouse or an engineer his factory. Skilled service was their major contribution, secure support their primary compensation. Unlike professionals in either century, they could not resign their position, but then neither could they be fired. Upon the death of a husband they were entitled to maintenance for life--or until they transferred their allegiance (symbolized by their name) from one domestic establishment to another.

The skilled service of a wife included the specialized housekeeping skills described in chapter one. Ironically, however, it also included the ability to act, at least temporarily, as a husband. To borrow from political terminology, a wife was potentially a regent. As Thomas Fuller explained it:

[a woman] in her husband's absence, is wife and deputy-husband, which makes her double the files of her diligence. At his return he finds all thing so well that he wonders to see himself at home when he was abroad-[10]

Thus, the economic roles of women were two-sided. As housekeepers, women were predominantly involved in female specialities, but as deputy-husbands most of them took at least a few steps into male terrain.

Looking backward to the colonial period from the nineteenth-century, when "true womanhood" precluded either business enterprise or hard physical labor, historians may

miss both the pervasiveness and the limitations of the role of deputy-husband. The presence of those female printers and merchants discovered by Dexter resulted less from "new economic conditions in the colonies" than from longstanding assumptions about the economic responsibilities of wives. Most occupations were indeed gender linked, yet colonial Englishmen did not focus upon the "feminine" or "masculine" qualities of these jobs. They were far less concerned with abstract notions like "womanhood" than with concrete roles like "wife" or "neighbor." Almost any task was suitable for a woman as long as it furthered the good of her family and was acceptable to her husband. This approach was both fluid and fixed. It allowed for varied working roles without challenging the patriarchal order of society. There was no proscription against female blacksmithing, for example, but there were strong prescriptions toward dutiful wifedom and motherhood. Context was everything.

To untangle the contradictory possibilities inherent in this definition, we must return to the day-to-day behavior of individual husbands and wives, first examining the factors which enhanced the role of deputy-husband and then exploring conditions which muted its significance for colonial women.

* * *

Historians can read wills, account books, and tax records, documents in which males predominate, but they cannot so easily explore the complex decision-making behind these records. Scattered glimpses of daily interaction suggest that there was as much variation in seventeenth and eighteenth century families as there is today. Some wives were servile, some were shrews, others were respected companions who shared the authority of their spouses in the management of affairs. Important conditions, however, separated the colonial world from our own. The most basic was spatial. Because much male work was performed in or near the houses, wives had frequent opportunity to see and hear what was done--and often to participate as well.

In the unspecialized, unsegregated working world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the possibilities of offering help to a husband were vast. The wife of a shoemaker might spin the strong linen thread needed for stitching. The wife of a weaver might assume the tedious job of winding yarn on the large spools called "quills." The wives of shopkeepers frequently helped to wait on customers just as the wives of small farmers went into the fields during planting and harvest. At all levels of society and in every occupation, wives assisted in the work of their husbands. In such an environment a wife's familiarity with day-to-day decisions was almost assured. Because servants

and apprentices lived within the household, a family occasion--mealtime or nightly prayer--could become the setting for a labor-management discussion.

In June of 1661, a young maid named Naomi Hull described a discussion which took place in the parlor of the Samuel Symond's home in Ipswich, Massachusetts early in that year. The case concerned the length of indenture of two Irish servants. The involvement of Mistress Symonds was not at issue, which makes this casual description of her participation all the more impressive. According to the maid, all of the family had gathered for prayer when one of the Irishmen asked if a neighbor's son was coming the next day to plow. Mistress Symonds said she thought so. One of the men asked who would plow with him. Mistress Symonds said, "One of you." When the two men announced that their indenture was up and that they would work no longer, both the master and the mistress questioned the servants. At one point Mistress Symonds interrupted her husband, "Let them alone," she said. "Now they are speaking let them speak their own minds." [12] Such an anecdote shows the way in which boundaries between male and female domains might blur in a common household setting.

In a tract on marriage frequently reprinted in New England, an English minister named William Secker had written, "It's between a man and his wife in the house, as

it is between the Sun and the Moon in the heavens, when the greater light goes down, the lesser light gets up; when one ends in setting, the other begins in shining." A wife he concluded, is sovereign in her husband's absence, but subject in his presence.[13] The most important variable, then, in female involvement in male work was the absence of husbands. Ambitious men in early America were often involved in many things at once--farming and running a grist mill, for example, or cutting timber and fishing. Because wives remained at home, they were often at the communication center of these diverse operations, given responsibility for conveying directions, pacifying creditors, and perhaps even making some decisions about the disposition of labor. On a day to day basis, this might be a rather simple matter, remembering to send a servant to repair a breach in the dam after he finished in the field, for example, or knowing when to relinquish an ox to a neighbor.[14] But during a prolonged absence of her husband a woman might become involved in more weighty matters.

Sometime in the 1670's Moses Gilman of Exeter, New Hampshire wrote to his wife from Boston:

Loving wife Elisabeth Gillman these are to desire you to speake to John Gillman & James Perkins and so order the matter thatt Mr. Tho. Woodbridge may have Twelve thousand fctt of merchantable boards Rafted by thirsday night or sooner if poseble they Can for I have Absolutly sculd them to him & if John Clough sen or any other doe deliver bords to make up the sum Give Receipts of whatt you Recieve

of him or any other man and lett no bote bee prest
 or other ways disposed of untill I Returne being
 from Him who is yos till Death

Moses Gilman [15]

If Gilman had doubted his wife's ability to "order the matter," he could have written a number of separate letters--to John Gilman, James Ferkin, John Clough and perhaps others. But securing a shipment of twelve thousand feet of merchantable boards entirely by letter would have been complicated and time consuming. Instead, Gilman relied on the good sense of his wife, who would be respected as his surrogate, and who probably had acquired some expertise in making out receipts for forest products and in conveying instructions to lumbering and shipping crews. A "loving wife" who considered herself his "till Death" was more trustworthy than a hired servant or business associate. As a true consort, she would know that by furthering her husband's interest, she furthered her own.

Thus, a wife with talent for business might become a kind of double for her husband, greatly extending his ability to handle affairs. This is beautifully illustrated in a document filed with the New Hampshire court papers. In February of 1674, Peter Lidget of Boston signed a paper giving Henry Dering of Piscataqua full power of attorney "to collect all debts due to him in that place and thereabout." On the reverse side of the document, Dering wrote: "I Henry

Dering have, and do hereby Constitute, ordaine, and appoint my loveing wife, Anne Dering my Lawful Attourney" to collect and sue for Peter Lidget's debts "by vertue of the Letter of Attourney on the other side." [16] (Anne Dering was the widow of Ralph Benning of Boston. She left her married name--and perhaps some of her business acumen--to her great-grandson, Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire. [17])

Determining when the wives of merchants acted for themselves and when in behalf of their husbands is not always so easy. Around 1700, Elizabeth Curwen, the wife of a prominent Salem merchant, was buying knives, mackerel lines, iron candlesticks, hammers, Jews harps, flints, and cowbells by the dozen from a grown son who lived in Boston. She was obviously "keeping shop." Compared with the shipping and timber interest of her husband, her enterprise was a petty one, but she appears to have been managing it herself. [18] For women in commercial towns, such dealing in imported goods may have been a kind of "cottage industry," handled in much the same way as the butter and egg businesses of farm wives.

The rural equivalent of Mistress Curwen of Salem was Mistress Hewlett of Ipswich. She became so successful in the poultry business that she was able to loan money to her husband. When a friend expressed surprise at this

arrangement, arguing that the wife's income really belonged to him if he needed it, Ensign Hewlett replied, "I meddle not with the geese nor the turkeys for they are hers for she has been and is a good wife to me." [19] To the neighbor, loaning money to one's spouse was contradictory, an assertion of individual rather than communal values. But to Hewlett no such threat was implied. His wife had "been a good wife." As long as independent female trade remained a minor theme within a larger communal ethic, it did not threaten either male supremacy or the economic unity of the family.

Thus, in colonial America, as in any historical period, formal authority and actual authority might differ. The law enjoined gender specialization; the realities of economic life often demanded community of effort. Women on farms, in fishing villages, or in commercial towns helped in their husband's work at many levels and some of them even developed independent enterprises of their own. It seems logical to assume, however, that women whose husbands were regularly absent--the wives of fishermen or merchant mariners, for example--might become more skilled in managing affairs than the wives of settled farmers or craftsmen.

Court cases involving fishermen give some glimpses of the kind of responsibilities assumed by their wives, who often appear in the foreground as well as the background of

the documents. Depositions in an action of 1660 reveal Anne Devorix working alongside her husband "taking account" as a servant culled fish from a spring voyage. She herself delivered a receipt from the master of the ship to the shop where the final "reckoning" was made. When her husband was at sea, she supervised spring planting on the family corn land as well as protecting the hogsheads, barrels, and flakes at the shore from the incursions of a quarrelsome neighbor.[20]

Even more visible in the records is Edith Creford of Salem, who frequently acted as an attorney for her husband, at one point signing a promisory note for 33 pounds in "merchantable cod fish at price current." [21] The wives of John Bryers and Robert Dutch promised fish in a less formal but no less binding manner.[22] Like the fishwives of Nantucket whom Crevecoeur described a hundred years later, these women were "necessarily obliged to transact business, to settle accounts, and in short, to rule and provide for their families." [23]

At a different social level, the wives of merchant sea captains played a similar role. Sometime in the year 1710, Elizabeth Holmes of Boston sat down with Patience Marston of Salem and settled accounts accumulated during a voyage to Newfoundland. Neither woman had been on the ship. They were simply acting as attorneys for their husbands, Captain

Robert Holmes, who had commanded the brigateen, and Mr. Benjamin Marston, who owned it.[24] The Marston family papers give a somewhat more detailed picture of the involvement of one woman in her husband's business as well as hinting at some of the attitudes involved. Patience Marston was the daughter of a minister, the granddaughter of a country gentleman, and the great granddaughter of Dorothy Dudley, yet she was not above "keeping shop" in her husband's absence.

Having suffered financial reverses, Benjamin Marston took command of one of his own ships in the summer of 1719, taking his twenty-two year old son Benjamin with him. Young Benjamin wrote his mother complete details of the first stage of the journey, which ended at Casco Bay in Maine. He included the length of the journey, the state of the family enterprises in Maine, and the price of lumber and staves, adding that he was "Sorry you should sett so long in ye house for no Adv[ance] but perhaps to ye prejudice of your health." It would be interesting to know what sort of business had kept Patience Marston at home. A week later Benjamin wrote again, assuring his mother that he was looking after the business in Maine. "My father w[oul]d have been imposed upon by m--c had I not interposed and stood stiffly to him," he explained. Was he acting out some Oedipal fantasy here, or was he perhaps performing as his

mother's surrogate, strengthening the resolve of the presumably more easy going father? The next day he wrote still another letter, asking for chocolate, complaining boyishly that "ye Musketo's bitt me so prodigiously as I was writing that I can hardly tell what it was I wrote," and conveying what must by then have been a common request from the absent husband. Mrs. Marston was to get a witnessed statement regarding a piece of family business and send it by "the first Oppertunity." [25]

The picture which arises from the Marston papers is a familiar one--the loyal wife as custodian of messages, guardian of errands, preserver of property, and keeper of accounts. Patience Marston may have become impatient with her chores or anxious about the business acumen of her husband, but there is no indication of this in the only writings preserved in her hand. She served as "deputy-husband" as circumstances demanded, and when her husband perished from small pox soon after arriving in Ireland, she declared herself grateful for the dear son who returned "as one from the dead" to take over his father's business. [26]

Because the business activities of wives were under the "wing, protection, and cover" of a husband (to repeat Blackstone's phrase), they are difficult to measure. The role of deputy husband deserves more careful and systematic

study. But two cautions are in order. First, the biases of the twentieth century may tempt historians to give undue significance to what were really rather peripheral enterprises. Acting as attorney to one's husband is not equivalent to practicing law. To colonial women, it may even have been less desirable than keeping house. This leads to the second point. The value of any activity is determined by its meaning to the participant, not to the observer. In early America, position was always more important than task. Colonial women might appear to be independent, even aggressive, by modern standards, yet still have derived their status primarily from their relationship to their husband.

This is well illustrated in a New Hampshire court record of 1671. A carpenter named John Barsham testified about an argument he had heard between Henry Sherburn and his second wife, Sarah, who was the widow of Walter Abbott. Barsham had come to the house to get some nails he needed for repairing a dwelling he had rented from them. According to Barsham, Sarah became so angry at her husband's opposition that she "rose off from the seat where she was sitting & came up to him with her arms akimbo saying we should have nayles & he had nothing to [do] in it." As if to add the final authority to her demand, she asked him "why he trode upon Walter Abbotts floer & bid him get out of doors,

& said that he had nothing to do there. "[27] Sarah Sherburne was an experienced and assertive woman. She had kept tavern "with two husbands and none." The house in which she and Sherburne lived had been part of her inheritance from her first husband.[28] But in the heat of the argument she did not say, "Get out of my house," or "get out of the house I provided." She said, "Get out of Walter Abbott's house." Her identity was not as property owner, but as wife. To assert her authority over her husband, she invoked the memory of his predecessor.

* * *

Certain factors in colonial society made it possible for some women to become intimately involved in their husband's work. Men and women often shared a common work space. Business was frequently conducted informally and contracts were often oral. Loyalty to family rather than some abstract notion of "femininity" determined the appropriateness of tasks. Wives were sometimes more reliable and more available than male servants or associates in the small, family-oriented operations which were characteristic even of wealthy New Englanders. In coastal communities, some familiarity with family business was a necessity for wives whose spouses were frequently at sea. All of these conditions made it possible for a few wives to emerge as independent "women of affairs" at the death of

their husbands.

As Cotton Mather expressed it, the transition to widowhood was easier for women who had already learned to act "as a Deputy Husband, for the maintaining of good Orders in the House." [29] The activities of three Portsmouth widows suggest the range of such endeavor in northern New England. For almost forty years, Elizabeth Alcock ran a dry-goods shop, sometimes in partnership with her cousin. [30] Though less visible in the records, Sarah Collins was obviously involved in international trade. A letter of 1715 shows her shipping New Hampshire forest products to an English kinsman in exchange for manufactured goods. [31] Ursula Cutt, on the other hand, became a farmer. She was killed by Indians in 1694 while haying. [32] The independence of these women is striking, yet even in maritime Portsmouth it seems to have been unusual.

A number of factors in early American life subordinated the role of deputy husband to the larger role of wife. For some women the proximity of male and female work diminished rather than encouraged enterprise. Husbands who stayed close to the home might give their wives little opportunity to handle the affairs of the family, even those which most intimately touched their own domain. The same woman who worked effectively as an assistant, especially with the authority of a living husband behind her, could still be

insecure in handling complex business arrangements because of inexperience and poor education. Finally (and perhaps the most important point of all), most women had other things to do. On closer examination, it is hardly surprising that at the end of the eighteenth century ninety percent of the loyalist women studied by Mary Beth Norton declared themselves "helpless" when confronted with the Royal Claims Commission.

Consider the question of education. For both sexes it began in the household and was reinforced in the church. But for girls it usually ended there. Common schools, which met infrequently and sometimes not at all despite the strict Massachusetts law, often discriminated against females. Grammar schools, which prepared the brightest scholars, always did. Girls learned the basic skills of housekeeping by working alongside their mothers or female neighbors just as the boys learned the rudiments of farming, lumbering, or fishing by assisting the men of their communities. But a variety of more specialized trades were open to boys by apprenticeship. Selectman's indentures from the town of Newbury for the years 1743-1760 show the contrasting training offered boys and girls at the lowest end of the social spectrum in a coastal town.

The selectman indentured sixty children of the town poor. Forty-nine of these were boys, who were apprenticed to blacksmiths, shipwrights, coedwainers, coopers, weavers, tanners, tailors, joiners, blockmakers, riggers, mastmakers, and even a perriwig maker in the town. The eleven girls, on the other hand, were promised instruction in the generalized skills of "housewifery" or "women's work," though occasionally spinning, carding, sewing, and knitting were also specified. Often the phrase "Art, Trade, or Mystery" on these printed forms were crossed out in the girls' indentures. All of the children were assured instruction in reading, but only the boys were to learn "to write a Ledgable hand & cypher as far as the Gouldin Rule" or "to write & Cypher as far as ye Rule of three or so far as to keep a Tradesmans Book." [33]

That more than five times as many boys as girls were apprenticed suggests that the support of daughters was usually handled in some other way. Either they remained with their families or were placed as dayworkers or maids on a less formal basis among the housewives of the town. The crossed-out passages in the indentures highlight the anomalous position of these female apprentices. Clearly, the training of blacksmiths and the training of their wives were two separate processes belonging to two separate systems. Predictably, in the region as a whole, women

lagged far behind men in their ability to write, a discrepancy which actually increased over the eighteenth century.[34]

What this meant in the daily lives of ordinary women is suggested by extant account books from the period. Although many such books survive, in the entire century between 1650 and 1750, there is not a single one known to have been kept by a woman, not even a simple record of household purchases or for that matter a collection of recipes. Purchasing an account book was a significant step for a farmer or village craftsman. A Topsfield weaver recognized this when he wrote in the inside of his, "Jchn Gould his Book of accounts I say my Book my owne book and I gave one shillin and four pence for it so much and no more." [35] Books like Gould's fall somewhere between the systematic, literate, merchant-oriented economy which came to dominate the external trade of New England and the local, personal, largely oral trade networks which were central to village life. As deputy-husbands a very few wives of sea captains or merchants had a small part in the former. But for most women economic life was centered in the latter.

Something of the range of bookkeeping methods employed in colonial America is preserved in an anonymous account book from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. One segment of this record was kept in the unformed scrawl typical of ordinary

craftsmen and farmers; another was neatly posted in the hand of a professional clerk. But evidence of a third and quite different method is preserved in entries for a laborer named Richard Trip, who traded work in the "gundalow" (a Piscataqua sailing vessel) for "75 meals of victualls" and "75 nights of lodging brct frcm the accc[un]t kept in chaulk on the wall." [36] The wife of the unknown shopkeeper may have been responsible for the chalk account as well as for providing the "diet," "washing," and "mittins" recorded in Trip's debits. For this sort of bookkeeping, she had no need for "cyphering."

The account book of Abraham How of Ipswich gives a clear picture of the village barter economy as it affected literate males. A farmer as well as a weaver, How traded cider, apples, oats, rye, hay and meat to Daniel Foster, who paid him in tobacco, the hire of a boat, and in carpentry. For Daniel Ray, on the other hand, he did extensive weaving and was paid in corn, cash, rum, earthen ware, sugar, salt and molasses. His book shows occasional transactions with women. In May of 1688, for example, "Old Mother Pearly" paid for the weaving of twenty-five yards of linsey-woolsey with seven pounds of butter and some fresh pork. [37] But such accounts are not frequent. How's book is representative of other weavers' and shoemakers' accounts and is similar to most general store records from the

region. Almost all ledgers include a few female names, but most accounts are with men. The commodities listed reflect the dominant products in each community. Ipswich farmers traded grain, farm labor, and animal products for shoes, weaving, rum, tobacco, skillets, and cotton wool. Householders from Marblehead paid for the same items in cash and fish, while those from Exeter usually offered pine, oak, and hemlock boards as well as labor-[38]

A male name at the top of a ledger is not in itself evidence that husbands did the actual trading, only that they were ultimately responsible for family purchases. But the fact that occasional entries in the books specify "by your wife" strongly suggests that the usual practice was otherwise, that men did the actual reckoning if not the initial bargaining in almost all cases. But what is most interesting about these records is the infrequency of entries for the products of female craft. Most sustained accounts for butter and cheese, sewing, or spinning are listed under the names of widows. For these women, the demise of a husband accentuated traditional female skills. This would not have been true if experience as a deputy-husband had prepared them to carry on the family farm or trade.

This conclusion is supported in the few accounts which shift from the name of a husband to the name of a widow. Thomas Bartlett, a Newbury shoemaker, listed twenty-one entries under the name of Ephraim Blesdel from March 13, 1725 until October 16, 1730. The debits were almost all for shoes. Until the middle of July 1728, the credits included hides, cider, onions, codfish, veal, and cash. But on that date, Bartlett reckoned with "the widow Debrath Blesdel." Nine of the twelve credits which follow are for spinning-[39] There is pathos in a second series recorded in Bartlett's book. From November 1729 until September 1733, he listed twenty-seven debits under John Woods name. All of these were for making and mending shoes. The credits already included some spinning as well as cash and skins when, on June 8, 1732, he noted in a taciturn entry: "husbands shoes sent back." From that point on the account was with "Widow Anne Wood," who now attempted to pay for her shoes in dried sage from her garden and in additional spinning-[40]

Judging only from the account books, one might conclude that most married women were seldom involved in trade even on the village level. Other sources, however, point to an extensive, less systematic, and largely oral trade network which paralleled and only occasionally intersected the systems represented in written accounts. A court record of

1682 provides an interesting sample. When a woman named Grace Stout appeared to answer several charges of theft, the witnesses against her included thirty-four persons, among them twenty-one housewives who were able to give precise account of the value of work performed or goods received. These were petty transactions--kneading bread for one woman, purchasing stockings knitted by another--not the sort of thing to turn up in colonial trade accounts but nevertheless an essential part of the fabric of economic life.[41]

Suggestive evidence of such a pattern appears in the account book of Thomas Chute, a tailor from Marblehead, Massachusetts who became one of the first settlers of New Marblehead in frontier Maine. Accounts dating from the second quarter of the eighteenth century, give glimpses of the economic activities of Chute's wife in both locations. In Marblehead, she occasionally bargained with her husband's customers, presumably while he was away on public business. In New Marblehead, she knitted stockings for several neighbors and for rather short periods "schooled" their children. But these scanty entries must have touched only the fringes of her industry. In May of 1737, Chute reckoned with Joseph Griffin of Marblehead, matching his own charges for tailoring against eight pounds debited in Griffin's book, finally balancing the whole with four pounds pending, "By you[r] wives account with mine." A similar entry

The story does not end there, however. A marked cheese does not have the durability of a marked tankard or clock. Unfortunately Mary Hunt's cheese did not make it to court in November, much less into the stream of physical artifacts from which we derive our understanding of a culture. Clark's servant apparently swallowed the evidence. Though Hunt won her case in the fall, Clark successfully appealed in June, standing on his dignity as a man never before suspected of "any crime much less so base a crime as theft and for so sorry a matter as cheese." Part of his long--and professionally inscribed--defense was a counter accusation. It was well known in the neighborhood, he said, that Goody Hunt sold her products to "one and another" and was apt to do so without her husband's knowledge, crying theft if called to reckon.[44] The informal nature of female trade might work to the advantage of a woman who wanted a little extra income independent of her husband, yet ultimately the economic power of any woman was inseparable from her larger responsibility as wife. Producing fat hens or well-flavored cheese was only a beginning. To succeed in business, a woman must also establish herself as an obedient and supportive wife.

In large measure the economic life of women in colonial America was separate from that of men. An anonymous document in the Essex Institute at Salem, Massachusetts

reveals the chasm which sometimes developed between "female trade" and "male business." The unknown author of this little treatise had been accused of fraudulently securing a deed from an aged widow. In his defense, he methodically itemized the charges against him, then answered each in turn. Two are of particular interest here--first, that the woman knew but little of the "common commerce of life," and second, that she was unable to form a "just idea" of what belonged to her or its value. The man answered the first charge with a flat denial:

I nor no other Person In this Neaborrhood I donte
believe Ever heard of her not knowing how for to
Trade.

But he at least partly acknowledged the second:

How could she or any other Person forme any just
Idia of what they are worth when it is Eveadent
that Part of it was In Another Persons
hands. . .and She Not Knowing how for to Right so
as for to keep my Acc[ount] nor she could not Read
Righting nor she could not Chipher so as for to
Cast up my Acc[ount].-[45]

These two statements summarize much of what we have said here. A talent for trade was one thing. The ability to handle complex business affairs was another. Although northern New England produced many Ursula Cutts or Edith Crefords, women who could carry on a family enterprise in the absence of their husbands, it produced even more women

like this anonymous widow of Salem. In her years as a housewife she had acquired considerable skill in the "common commerce of life" but little that would prepare her to deal with a sophisticated and aggressive assault on her property, especially when legal documents were involved. No longer able to rely upon a spouse or a son, she had truly become a "relict."

* * *

In February of 1757, Mary Russell of Concord, Massachusetts wrote a letter to her brother-in-law Samuel Curwin of Salem in which she joked, "I should have answered Your letter long before this had I known when we were to come to Boston but you know I am a Femme Covert and cannot act for my self." [46] Her wit betrays a deeper feeling--if not yet a feminist sense of injustice, certainly a quite consciously feminine annoyance at the officious pedantry of the law, at least as it was discussed in her own parlor. Mary Russell knew that the restrictions of the common law had little relationship to the ordinary decisions of her daily life. Within her own domain, she acted confidently and independently. Yet the predicament which she described in jest became a reality for at least some women in the course of the eighteenth-century, as both business and law became increasingly sophisticated.

The economic roles of wives were based upon two potentially contradictory values--gender specialization and identity of interest. A woman was expected to become expert in the management of a household and the care of children, but she was also asked to become a helpful consort in the economic affairs of her husband, ready to be his representative and even his surrogate if circumstances demanded it. These two roles were compatible in the traditional world because the home was the communication center of family enterprise if not always the actual place of work. A woman could wind quills or make out receipts for lumber and still keep an eye on her wash. As long as business transactions remained personal and a woman had the support of a familiar environment, she could move rather easily from the role of housewife to the role of deputy-husband, but few women were prepared either by education or by experience to become "independent women of affairs." True, wives were presumed to have at least a general knowledge of the family assets and widows who did not have grown sons were routinely granted administration of their husband's estates. But young widows just as routinely remarried, apparently preferring the dependence of a wife to the rather problematical independence of a relict.[47]

Day-to-day experience in assisting with a husband's work might prepare a woman to compete successfully in a male world--should she lose her husband, should she find herself without a grown son, should she choose not to remarry or find it impossible to do so. But in the immediate world, such activities might have far different meaning. A willingness to help demonstrated a woman's loyalty to her husband, but the chores assigned were often menial and competed for attention with her direct responsibilities as a housekeeper and mother. Twentieth-century women might lament the lack of options in early America, but in doing so they may miss the true significance of the domestic roles. It is one thing to note the limited achievements of women as deputy-husbands, another to explore the rich and little known complexities of the world which was their own.

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2. Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," William & Mary Quarterly 3d Ser., 33 (1976), 386-409.
3. Essex Files, V, 57.
4. Marylynn Salmon, "Equality or Submersion? Feme Covert Status in Early Pennsylvania," in Carol Ruth Beerkin and Mary Beth Norton, Women of America, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979) pp. 93-98 has a concise summary of common law and equity concepts which applied to colonial women. She stresses dependency as does Alexander Keyssar, "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts: A Problem in the History of the Family," Perspectives in American History, VIII (1974) pp. 99-111.
5. Sir William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765-1769) I, 442, quoted in Salmon, p. 94.
6. MPCR, IV, 177-178.
7. Morris, History of American Law, pp. 155-156; Keyssar, "Widowhood," p. 101-103.
8. James Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalite in Pre-Industrial America," WMQ 3d Ser., 35 (1978) p. 32.
10. Thomas Fuller, The Holy and the Profane State (1642), quoted in G.E. and R.R. Fussell, The English Countrywoman, (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971), p. 47.

12. Essex Files, II, 295-297. (June 1661)
13. William Secker, A Wedding Ring, (Boston, 1690), n.p.
14. Essex Files, VIII, 278, 411; NH Court Papers, I pt. 1, 35.
15. Essex Files, VI, 412.
16. NH Court Papers, II, 325.
17. NLD, 88, 190, 738, 737. Anne Deering's daughter by her first husband, Anne Benning, married Samuel Wentworth, the grandfather of Benning Wentworth.
18. List of goods "Sold unto my mother Corwin, Aug. 8, 1699" in Corwen Family Papers, II, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass. Other receipts and notes addressed to Elizabeth[Gibbs] Corwin, wife of Jonathan Corwin, in volume III. Most of these are signed by her son, Robert Gibbs.
19. Essex Files, VIII, 10.
20. Essex Files, II, 291, 407-409.
21. Essex Files, II, 390.
22. Essex Files, II, 387, 402; VI, 12.
23. J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Letters From An American.
24. Essex Institute MS. Barton Papers, I, 7.
25. Barton Papers, I, 20.

26. Barton Papers, I, 25.
27. NH Court Papers, I:2, 543
28. NH Court Papers, II, 471; NLD, 57, 628-9.
29. Cotton Mather, Ornaments For The Daughters of Zion, (Cambridge, 1692), p. 101.
30. NLD, 60, 174, 232; Andrew Wiggin Account Book, MS, New Hampshire Historical Society, entry for October 5, 1724; John Moffat Ledger, NHHS, p. 17b.
31. MS. Warner House, Portsmouth, NH. Penhallow Papers.
32. Cotton Mather, Decernium Luctuosum (Boston, 1699), p. 253; "Journal of the Rev. John Pike," Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc. (Boston, 1875-1876), p. 128.
33. MS. Essex Institute. Coffin Papers, I, 89-131.
34. Kenneth A. Lockridge, Literacy in Colonial New England, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), pp. 38-42. I would emphasize that for women the discrepancy is in writing, not necessarily in reading as Lockridge has assumed.
35. John Gould Account Book, 1697-1723, MS, Essex Institute.
36. Portsmouth Account Book, MS, New England Historic Genealogical Society. See p. 203 for Trip account.
37. Abraham How Account Book, MS, Ipswich Historical Society, Ipswich, Massachusetts.
38. John Burnham Account Book, Chebacco Parish, Ipswich, Mass. 1697-1707, MS, Essex Institute, illustrates the farm accounts. Nicholas Ferryman Ledger, MS, New

Hampshire Historical Society, has accounts from
Marblehead 1725-1727 and from Exeter 1723-1725.

39. Thomas Bartlett Account Book. Essex Institute, p. 41.
40. Bartlett Accounts, p. 93.
41. Essex Files, VIII, 279-283.
42. Account Book of Thomas Chute, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine, pp. 6, 99, 148, 152, 168, 171, 172, 177, 194, 195.
43. New Hampshire Court Papers, III, 223, 228, 235; I:2, 427, 429; State Papers of New Hampshire, XXXX, 255, 263; 323-324.
44. NH Court Papers, III, 228.
45. "Testimony Regarding Testamentary Deed," Thomas Bartlett Papers, MS. Essex Institute.
46. Mary Russell to Mr. Curwen, Feb. 1757, Corwin Papers, III, Essex Institute.
47. The marriage rate of widows seems to be related to age. The Woburn women studied by Keyssar did not routinely remarry, but they had grown children who were usually responsible for their support. "Widowhood in Massachusetts," p. 99-111. Of 28 male descendants named in the New Hampshire probate records for the decade of the 1650's, nineteen left widows. Although 80% of these widows became executors of their husband's estates, 77% remarried. Although the rate of remarriage was less in later samples, the age at widowhood had apparently increased. Young widows still found husbands; elderly women could rely upon grown sons.

	<u>1650</u>	<u>1670</u>	<u>1700</u>	<u>1730</u>
Decedents with widows	19	24	23	27
Percent of widows who are named executors[a]	80%	79%	80%[b]	70%[b]
Percent of widows who remarried	76%	54%	35%[c]	44%

a. includes joint administration

b. 10% of widows in 1730 and 22% in 1700 renounced administration.

c. 12 of the 23 widows were over 60

NHSP, XXXI, 20-42; 115-167, 459-513, XXXII, 374-434.
Information on remarriage from NLD.

Chapter Three

A Friendly Neighbor

In northern New England, a "neighbor" might be a woman living thirty feet away on a definable street in a well-developed group of dwellings clustered around a village meeting house. She might also be a housewife within shouting distance in the garrison house at the top of the next rise. Settlement patterns varied, but most folks had neighbors. In the earliest years of the seventeenth century, a few adventurers and traders in the "eastern parts" carved out huge estates surrounded by woods and water, but for more than a century after 1675, French and Indians retarded any such impulse toward the solitary contemplation of nature. It was dangerous to live alone. But beyond that, neighborliness was a cultural norm in all the New England colonies, and one which may have had particular meaning for women. In 1652, the Court of Assistants in Plymouth Colony ordered a would-be Daniel Boone to bring his wife and children in from the woods "near unto the neighborhood, that so she may be in a way of help, as necessity shall require." [1]

For a woman, "necessity" might come in the form of childbirth or serious illness. But it also came in simple day-to-day needs associated with housekeeping. A neighbor

might help lift a heavy wash kettle, replenish a start of yeast, or supply a recipe for relieving a cow of the colic. Neighbors furnished commodities and tools, and they also contributed a resource in much shorter supply in New England--labor.

As important to early American families as trade--whether tallied in an account book or kept in chalk on the wall--was the informal sharing of goods and resources. Occasionally these arrangements were spelled out, as in the inventory of Benjamin Gage of Haverhill which lists "halfe a brass kettle and half a great iron pot," but usually they were more casual.[2] When young Constance Oliver of Portsmouth, New Hampshire opened the door one morning, she found her neighbor Mary Richards asking to borrow a kettle. Since her mother wasn't home, she asked Goody Richards to wait awhile, in the meantime going herself to another neighbor's house to fetch a coal of fire-[3]

Borrowing was part of the rhythm of life at all social levels. Women not only shared commodities. They shared the work which produced them. Dropping in on a neighbor, a woman quite easily joined in the task on hand. Not wanting to appear too interested in a friendly weaver, Faith Black of Topsfield sat down by his loom and began to shell peas. Only when she spent too much time at his house did her behavior become suspect-[4] Gadding was discouraged, but

socializing was not. Johannah Green counseled her married daughter to become more involved with her neighbors, telling her "that she might better do her work an go to another bodys house than they that have a great family can go to hers." [5] Shared work in this form derived from the same needs and offered some of the same rewards as the more visible "huskings" and "quiltings" common to village life. Berryng, washing, or spinning were female specialties which might bring neighbors together. Sharing work, women shared other responsibilities as well. When a little girl named Hannah Hutchinson was finishing her mother's wash at a neighbor's house, two other housewives were on hand to catch her in a lie. [6]

Emplcyng servants was a more formal way of getting one's work done while helping with the socialization of other women's children. Few colonial housewives could get through the year without some form of hired help. Household helpers might be dayworkers engaged to perform a specific task, full-time servants living in the house but free to leave at will, indentured servants or apprentices under contract for a specific length of time, or slaves. Judging from the infrequency of labor entries in probate inventories, the last two types were far less common than the first. Most servants were not strangers from another land, but neighbors.

"Hannah Downing was a good maid," said her mistress, "and would make a poor man a good wife." [7] The normal sequence was clear. The effort expended in teaching a maid to spin and sew yielded only short-term, immediate rewards for her mistress; the long term advantages would accrue elsewhere. Because servants were usually children or adolescents, they brought with them the problems of immaturity. They quarreled with the children of the family and outgrew shoes. They contracted measles or, what was worse, went out at night with the boys of the neighborhood. And they quit. A housewife approaching harvest or the birth of another child might unexpectedly find herself without help. But there was little she could do. Not even the most elegant woman in the most elaborate house in eighteenth-century Salem or Portsmouth was entirely immune from the labor shortage created by the high rate of marriage in colonial New England. A woman who wanted to assure herself of appropriate help "in season" had best tune her ear to the village network and prove herself a "friendly neighbor."

By twentieth-century standards, even the largest colonial towns were small. In 1754, Salem, Massachusetts, the most populous town north of Boston, had 3462 people. [8] The average town population in 1750 has been estimated at 1,280 for Massachusetts (including Maine) and at

640 for New Hampshire.[9] Obviously men and women who spent all their lives in a village of a few hundred persons knew their neighbor's names and probably their life history and their personal idiosyncracies as well. But it is a mistake to romanticize the concept of "neighborliness," to assume that material interdependence and physical proximity automatically insured "meaningful personal relationships, a sense of participation, and a feeling of collective caring." [10]

Guides in historic houses in New England love to display the "latch string" in seventeenth-century doors. When the string was out, so the story goes, visitors were welcome. When it was in, no company was sought. Such a subtle but commonly understood language might have been used. Surviving records show that at least some housewives employed even more colorful methods. An Ipswich woman snubbed her neighbor by hanging a dish cloth out the door when she saw her approaching. A Hampton, New Hampshire wife attempted to trap her neighbor, whom she suspected of being a witch, by draping the door jamb with bay leaves.[11] As these women knew, a neighbor could provide commodities, household help, friendship--or aggravation.

Contention among neighbors has been a central theme in the recent social history of New England, yet most studies have concentrated on the political and institutional

development of towns and have consequently had very little to say about women per se. This chapter will isolate themes of neighborliness of particular importance to women by examining the compact center of one town in one period--Ipswich, Massachusetts, circa 1670.

Settled in 1639 under the leadership of such pre-eminent Puritans as Thomas Dudley, Simon Bradstreet, Richard Saltonstall, and John Winthrop, Jr., the town gave intellectual, religious, and military leadership to New England in the seventeenth century-[12] But there are more important reasons for choosing it as a subject of study. Because Ipswich was the seat of one of the quarterly courts of Essex County, its citizens--including a number of housewives who might otherwise never have bothered to enter a suit--had easy access to formal justice. As a result an unusual number of the petty squabbles and mundane struggles of housekeeping in this seventeenth-century community have been preserved to history. And because Ipswich was blessed at the turn of the twentieth century with an intelligent and energetic town historian, Thomas Franklin Waters, many of these events can be traced to a specific neighborhood. Ipswich is not only a mirror of seventeenth-century Puritanism. It is a kind of laboratory for examining interdependence among women in a closely settled New England town.

* * *

Sometime in the winter of 1638, Samuel Symonds wrote to John Winthrop, Jr. about his preparations to move to Ipswich in the spring. He sent detailed directions for the building of a house at Argilla, part of his grant of 1700 acres; he conveyed his wife's love ("she is very glad that she shalbe your neighbour at Ipswich"); and he expressed hope that all would "goe on very well & ccmfortably" now that the ministers had been settled. The key to peace in the church, he believed, was the "sentence of the Apostle, Let every one esteeme an cther better then himselfe & study the vally-way to rise to true honour." [12] Men and women in seventeenth-century Ipswich may indeed have studied the "vally-way," but court records of the period reveal a vigorous defense of every available peak. Spiritual idealism coexisted with material inequality and an heirarchal social order, which may have been why an ill-mannered worshipper Thomas Baker laughed out loud in his pew one Sabbath in the winter of 1678 when the Reverend Mr. Hubbard said "by way of exhcartation that the good a Christian desired did not lie in lands and great farmes 'but in the lit and countinace of gods favioure.'" [13]

Although all of the original inhabitants of the town had land, some had a great deal more than others. One scholar has classified three-quarters of the population as

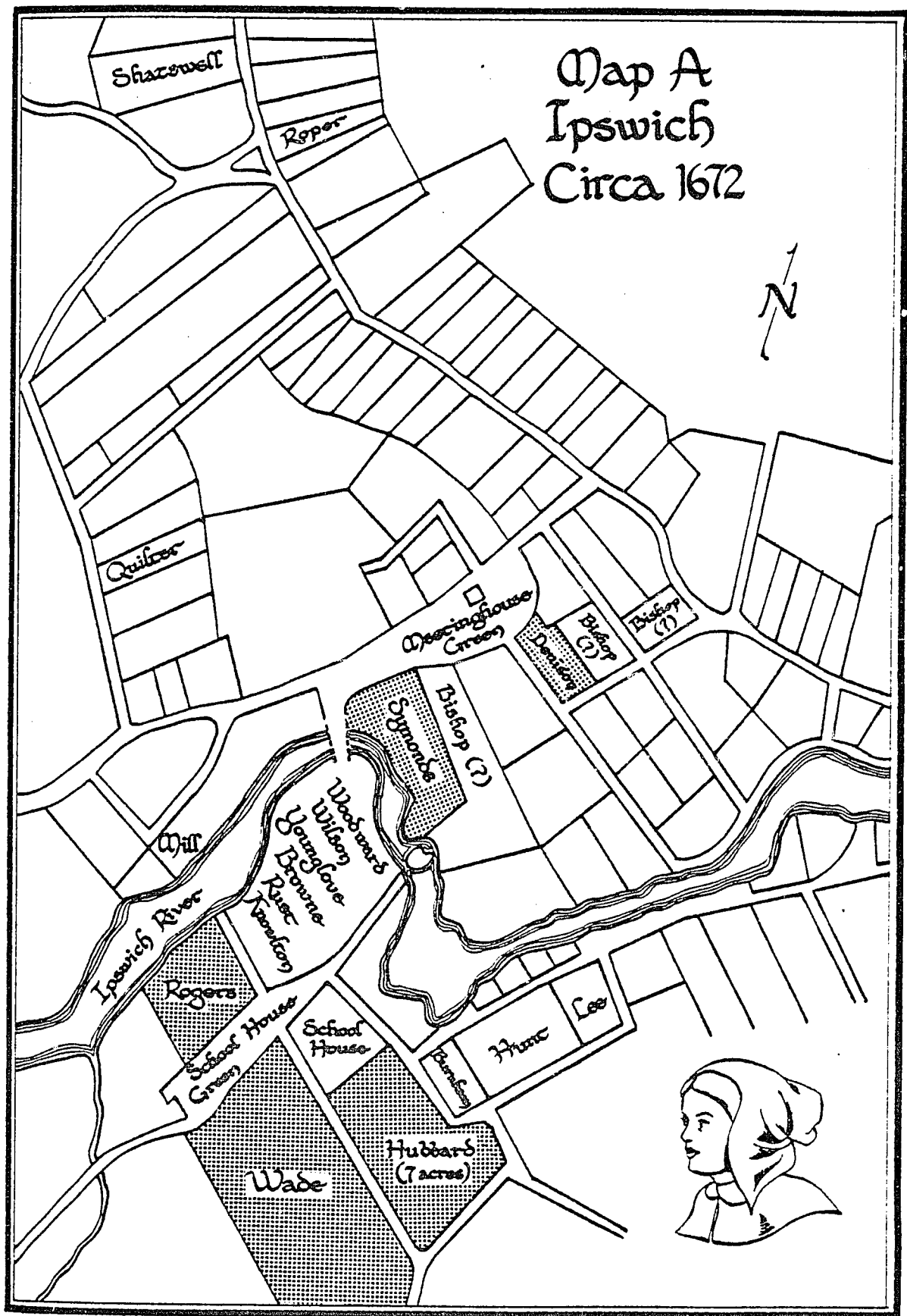
"small landholders," whose allotments ranged from twenty poles to ninety acres. Among the remaining quarter, fifty-six men owned from one hundred to four hundred acres; eleven men owned more than four hundred but fewer than a thousand; and five men owned a thousand or more-[14] Three of these five largest landholders--Samuel Symonds, Daniel Denison, and Jonathan Wade--were still living in Ipswich in 1670. William Hubbard, one of the two ministers in the town, was a son of the fourth.

Men like Symonds and Hubbard were not hypocrites. In their minds, material inequality was simply a condition of life, an inextricable part of the natural order sustained by God. Greed, not wealth, was the true impediment to peace. Under God, common men and women naturally deferred to the eminent just as the rich and well born showed by the quality of their leadership a genuine care for the well-being of the entire community including the poor who would always be with them. The spatial organization of Puritan Ipswich reflected this concept of interdependence.

The town had been laid out as an open-field English village with most settlers living on small plots in the center of the village and traveling to tillage land on the periphery. The "homelots" of Symonds, Denison, Hubbard, and Wade were distinguished less by their size than by their proximity to important public institutions. Denison and

Symonds--when they were not attending General Court or visiting one of their large farms in the outlying countryside--lived near the Meetinghouse Green. Hubbard and Wade built their houses near the Schcolhouse Green on the opposite side of the river, as did John Rogers, the eminent first minister of the town.

The meetinghouse at the center of the village gave tangible form to the social conservatism as well as to the utopian idealism of its builders. Rejecting popish ornament and ritual for the plain word of God, the saints nevertheless perpetuated the Anglican custom of "seating" the congregation in ranked order. Gender was the first distinction among God's children. The gospel of damnation and grace intoned from the pulpit was the same for all Christians, but men and women heard it from different sides of the room. Among covenanted members of the church, women predominated. Yet men did the preaching, wore the title of Elder and Deacon with sober dignity, and collected the tithes. Their wives sat on the opposite side of the room or in the gallery and wrestled with small children--and sometimes with each other. Before God there was "neither Jew nor Greek. . .bond nor free. . .male nor female," but within the meeting house, seats were assigned according to sex, wealth, and age. Not until late in the seventeenth century were family pews constructed and these were reserved



for a few of the most prominent citizens of the town.[15] Women could not walk into the meeting house without being reminded of their separateness, of the primacy of their gender identity.

The meeting house green was the focal point of village life, but it was hardly the grassy oasis of nostalgic memory. Strewn with horse manure and rutted with cart tracks, it was set with such rude reminders of human and animal cussedness as the whipping post, the pound, the watchhouse, and the jail. Around the meeting house itself were the remnants of a stone fortification never used and always out of repair, but not officially abandoned until 1702 when the town declared itself free of Indian danger by selling the rock and using the proceeds to buy a town clock.[16] Women--like men--were subject to the civil authority symbolized in the jail and the whipping post, but they did not participate in town meeting or serve in such offices as constable or keeper of the pound. Nor did they experience the military order of training day or the often drunken disorder at the tavern afterwards when for a few hours at least social rank dissolved in a common maleness.[17]

The houses of Samuel Symonds and Daniel Denison, located on the south side of meeting house green, were foci of civil order. At sixty, "Major-General" Denison held the

highest military rank in Massachusetts. At seventy-six, "Deputy-Governor" Symonds had given thirty years of service to the town, the county, and the colony.[18] In 1670, both men served as judges of the quarterly court of Essex County, a moveable tribunal which met in Ipswich in March and September of each year and in Salem in June and November. Long before each session, these two men were involved in the controversies which would later come before the court. They issued warrants, listened to complaints, and recorded sworn testimony--all of this within the walls of their own houses.

Without question, formal authority in seventeenth-century New England was held by men. Judges and juries were male. So were the majority of plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses. This is partly because so many of the concerns of the court involved areas of life in which men predominated. Unpaved roads, unpaid debts, unsettled estates, and unbranded cattle created much of the business in each session. Yet there was hardly an aspect of life untouched by public authority in Puritan Ipswich. The same court which issued tavern licenses and enforced school law admonished Goodwife Brabrook of Ipswich for carrying a half bushel of corn or peas with her when she went to meeting and fined old Goodman Lee for swearing by his salvation. For women's history, the court's intrusiveness in daily life had important consequences.[19] It dignified what might

otherwise have been dismissed as the "prattle" of housewives and servants. Insofar as the distance between "public" and "private" concerns was diminished, the domains of men and women became more congruent.

Colonial Americans inhabited a world quite different from our own. Central to this world was the power of gossip. In March of 1673, for example, the court heard a case involving the sexual misbehavior of a young wife of the town. Of fourteen depositions in evidence, eleven had been given at the home of Daniel Denison in January and February of that year. In the magistrate's parlour, scraps of rumour which had circulated on the south side of the river for months became the proof which brought Sarah Row to the "high place" in the meeting house on lecture day, where she stood "all the time of the meeting from the last bell ringing. . . in open view of the congregation with a fair white paper written in fair capital letters FOR MY BAUDISH CARRIAGE." [20] The case of Sarah Row was one of almost two dozen actions involving her immediate neighbors on the south side of Ipswich River over a period of about eighteen months. Although only five of the twenty-six defendants in these cases were female, eighty-five of the 240 depositions were delivered by women. [21]

Obviously women played a significant part in the communication networks which bonded or sundered neighborhoods. Although they testified in county court cases less frequently than men and usually showed expertise in roles more closely related to their own domestic roles, their concerns interlocked with those of their husbands. In Sarah Row's neighborhood it is almost impossible to distinguish private from public issues, sexual slander from economics, or the entanglements of women from the feuds of their spouses. The evidence presented in court merely hints at the complexity of interaction within the neighborhood itself. To the modern reader sifting through the records the chains of innuendo become almost ludicrous as when Margaret and Elizabeth Boarman deposed that Laurence Clenton said that Goody Abbot told Goody Howard that. . . or when Goody Hunt testified that Thomas Knowlton came to her house and said that Joseph Lee had told him that he had heard that Knowlton had said that Goody Hunt had accused Betty Woodward of. . . [22]

A young man named Nathaniel Browne, who had set up a soapboiling business in the neighborhood, learned at firsthand the power of talk. He inadvertently returned the wrong pair of sheep shears and was accused of stealing. His wife, Judith, applied for admission to the church and found herself in a clamor of gossip (none of which was

specifically reiterated in court). In his own testimony, Browne blamed their troubles on the shoemaker Knowlton, another young man and relative newcomer to the neighborhood. Knowlton had "set neighbors together by the ears," Browne complained. He and Judith had tried to handle their grievance privately, but it had done no good. He had "asked Goody Leigh's advice, also Goodwife Rust," correctly perceiving that gaining the allegiance of the respected wives of the neighborhood would further his cause. When Goodwife Rust remained "as intimate as ever" with his enemy Knowlton, he was forced to petition the court.[23]

Goodwives Lee and Rust are barely visible in formal records from seventeenth-century Ipswich. They neither owned property nor held public office, yet in the world of Nathaniel Browne they civically occupied a position of eminence. The chains of hearsay which reverberated in Daniel Denison's parlour cannot be dismissed as idle gossip, certainly not as a mischievous outlet for otherwise powerless women. Gossip was an effective mechanism used by both sexes in the intimate arena of this Puritan town. When women talked, men as well as other women listened.

* * *

On one level, then, the Essex County court records demonstrate the intermeshing of domestic and public concerns. But on closer examination they also point toward

a separate world of women, one which had rules and conflicts of its own. Housewives in colonial Ipswich can be divided into three social groups--the mistresses of the big houses (often the wives of magistrates or ministers); their near neighbors but social inferiors, the wives of small landowners and craftsmen; and an indeterminate but growing group who lived in rented houses or in semi-dependence upon employers or parents. The difference between the second and third group was often determined by age as much as wealth. Interaction among these three groups is apparent in the case of Sarah Rowe.

Sarah was one of eight daughters of the carpenter Ezekiel Woodward, but she had lived and worked for many years in the house of William Hubbard, which stood just across the schoolhouse green from her parents' home. Before she was eighteen she married a fisherman named William Rowe, who spent much of his time at the Isles of Shoals in Maine, but who seems to have rented a house somewhere in Ipswich for at least one winter. There are clear references to "Sarah Rowe's house," though William owned no land. Sarah's status after her marriage remained somewhat fluid. She maintained friendships with the servants in the Hubbard house and remained close to an unmarried girl named Sarah Buckley, who worked in the kitchen and cowyard of Nathaniel Rust, the glover. But she was also in and out of Judith

Browne's house, and she was friendly with Hannah Knowlton, the twenty-five year old wife of the shoemaker.[24] All of these women had something to say when Sarah's case come to court.

In contrast, Sarah's former mistress, Margaret Hubbard, remained aloof from the squabbles which rocked her neighborhood. Her husband testified in Sarah's behalf, but any opinions which she had were expressed in private. She was insulated less by the seven-acre homelot which surrounded her house than by her dignity as a minister's wife and a gentlewoman. The mistresses of the big house moved in a social--and often familial--circle of their own. Margaret Hubbard's mother, the widow of the Reverend Nathaniel Rogers, lived beyond the schoolhouse on the other side of the green. So for a time did her brother John, soon to be president of Harvard College. John's wife Elizabeth was the daughter of Major-General Denison.

Eminence did not mean independence, however. The houses of the Hubbards, the Rogers, and the Denisons were distinguished by books, pictures, gilt looking glasses, and rich textiles. (Margaret Hubbard's father had even owned "a treble viol") but their floors were swept and their beds were made by the young daughters of the small landowners of Ipswich. Just as Mistress Hubbard had employed the carpenter's daughter, Sarah Row, her mother, Mistress

Rogers, had for years depended upon Mary Quilter, the daughter of a small farmer whose houselot was on the other side of the river. Patience Denison, the Major-General's wife, had engaged a number of servants over the years including Sarah Roger, whose father Walter owned a house, barn and homestead worth eighty pounds on the High Street.[25]

Thus, relationships among women in seventeenth-century Ipswich could form in a number of directions. They could be both vertical or horizontal, involving economic links between servants and mistresses as well as close friendships among women of comparable position. The rules which governed social intercourse cannot be fully reclaimed at this distance, but female testimony in a number of cases provides some vivid clues. The cases of Frances Quilter (an ordinary wife) and Patience Denison (a gentlewoman) clearly reveal what we might call the Rules of Industry and of Charity as they affected self-definition in this seventeenth-century village. A cluster of cases involving Elizabeth Hunt (the wife of an aspiring freeman) demonstrate the problems involved in maintaining the Rule of Modesty.

All three "Rules" are expressed in Proverbs 31. Bathsheba was involved in many discrete tasks, as we have seen, but behind all her effort was the Rule of Industry: "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth

not the bread of idleness." Because women's work was essentially supportive, tied not to products but to people, it was by nature often invisible. Women did not build houses or rig ships or preach sermons; they fed and clothed the men who did. As a consequence "work" could never be isolated from the larger relationship of which it was a part. Nor could it often be directly measured. Because a day's effort was quickly swallowed, the measure of productivity was often in the worker herself--a good wife kept busy.

A housewife's efforts could not be confined to her own home, however. A virtuous woman "stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy," as the Bible said. In the larger sense, this Rule of Charity simply meant neighborly concern, a willingness to extend oneself to meet the needs of others. During the witchcraft uproar of 1692, for example, one suspected woman was saved by a petition of one-hundred-sixteen residents of her town, who testified that she "was allways, readie & willing to doe for [her neighbors] w[ha]t laye in her power night & day, though w[i]th hazard to her health or other danger." [26] For wealthy women, however, it meant hand to hand relief of poor neighbors. Dorothy Dudley was a "friendly neighbor" precisely because she was "pitiful to poor, whom oft she feed and clothed with her store."

The Rule of Modesty was keyed to the concept of hierarchy. Because her husband was "known in the gates" and sat "among the elders of the land," the virtuous woman of Proverbs was entitled to dress in "silk and purple" and to make herself "coverings of tapestry." A woman must not take these visible emblems too seriously, however. Even as she adorned herself, the godly Bathsheba knew that "beauty is vain." It was not just the threat of sexual impropriety which made modesty a female virtue, but the secondary position of women in society. In the public world, their role was to reflect but never to assert status. Modesty was reflected in speech, in manners, and in attitude, as well as in clothing.

Because the boundaries of authority and responsibility were largely defined by custom rather than law, casual watching and warding by neighbors was far more significant to most women than the power of magistrates. The close association of women in the premodern world was both conservative and supportive, reinforcing the traditional distribution of authority even as it guarded against its abuse. For colonial women, having the "character" of a good wife was as valuable as having a good lawyer might be today. This is clearly illustrated in the story of Frances Quilter, a woman who understood the Rule of Industry.

* * *

Frances Quilter's husband, Mark, had a reputation in Ipswich for drinking and losing his temper and as a result had been the butt of roisterous humor in the tavern on training days. His own lapses in public dignity may have made him overly conscious of his authority at home.[27] In March of 1664, he was fined for striking his wife and for hitting a neighbor. The incident with the neighbor occurred on a morning when Rebeckah Shatswell had come to the house to "sit and work" with Gody Quilter "to bear her company." Quilter came into the room and demanded something to eat. The exchange which followed emerges vividly from the court record as a triangular dialogue between husband, wife, and neighbor.

"Why are you so hasty?" said the wife.

"It may be that he had not his breakfast," said the neighbor.

"Yes, two hours before he ate meat," the wife countered, but the husband merely groaned, "A poor deal."

"Thus, look here of my pottage," said the wife to the neighbor. "[See] whether I did not boil a good deal of meat."

"It may be you boil a good deal and eat it up yourself," the neighbor answered, whereupon the husband turned upon her.

"Hold your prating," he said.

"I prate no more than you," she replied, when to her great surprise, he struck her and threw her out the door.[28]

The neighbor's role in this family argument shifted rapidly. Rebeckah Shatswell came to the house as a friend. But as the bickering began, her position shifted. Goody Quilter appealed to her first as a defender and then as a judge. She perhaps saw herself as neutral, but to Mark Quilter she was simply an intruder. Even though she supported his right to a good breakfast, he became furious that she was in his house at all. To acknowledge her help would have been to accept her right to intervene in the internal relationships of his family. Horizontal lines between housewife and housewife might form a counterweight to vertical relationships between husband and wife. Mark Quilter's resentment showed that he recognized this, as well he might, for it was the testimony of neighboring wives which eventually brought his conviction in court.

Yet the triangle thus formed was far from simple, as Goody Quilter knew. Attacked by her husband in front of her friend, she became defensive about her cooking. In some sense, neighbors were an informal jury of one's peers. Only by living up to the cluster of responsibilities dictated by custom did one earn the respect--and the potential

support--of other women. Paramount among these responsibilities was Industry. The broth left in the kettle was proof that Goody Quilter had not wasted her morning.

The case of a wayward wife from nearby Topsfield gives additional evidence of the way female neighbors enforced this rule. The clinching point in the case against Faith Black seems to have come from Goody Hobbes who testified that Faith was away from home so much that she had neglected her washing and failed to feed her swine. When the charitable--or meddlesome--neighbor added the husband's shirts to her own wash and carried food to the pigs, all the thanks the wife gave her "was to tell her she did not ask her to do it." [29] This foolish wife lost her case long before it reached the court.

Although the Rule of Industry affected all women, the Rule of Charity was especially important for a wealthy woman like Patience Denison, the wife of the Major-General. Mistress Denison was the second daughter of Dorothy and Thomas Dudley and the sister of the poet Anne Bradstreet, but her modest reputation in colonial history was achieved through her struggles with a servant named Sarah Roper. In March of 1665, the Denisons prosecuted Sarah, who had apparently been stealing from family supplies for more than a year. Most of the stolen provisions had found their way

into the kitchen of an impoverished young wife of the neighborhood, Mary Bishop. At this time, her husband Job may have been at sea. She perhaps lived in part of a house owned by Thomas Bishop just opposite the meeting house, or she may have rented a small dwelling owned by a fisherman named Robert Dutch in the block behind the Denison property-[30]

Whatever its location, Mary Bishop's dwelling was in handy reach of Sarah Roper. When Goody Bishop lacked milk to make a posset, Sarah brought it to her. When her brother came to town, Sarah provided beer for his entertainment. Meeting her at the well, Sarah gave her cider from the Denison cellar and on other occasions apples for her children, suet for pudding, and pork. In return Goody Bishop gave Sarah some mackerel, a common grade of fish which she said they did not have at the Denison house-[40] Like friendships between other women in the same community, the bonds between Sarah and Goody Bishop were cemented with small favors. The difference, of course, was that Patience Denison supplied the goods.

Mary Bishop's defense before the court is revealing, not so much of her own situation, but of the community norm of charity which underlay her plea. She begged clemency on account of her low condition, another woman testifying that the Bishop family would have starved on their scanty diet

"had not Sarah Roper helped them with provisions." Such testimony carried a subtle reproach to Mistress Denison. More pointed was the evidence of another neighbor who said she had heard Sarah Roper call her mistress "an old Jew and hobling Joane." [32]

What is most instructive about this case is not the thievery of the servant, but the reluctance of the mistress to invoke the law. Sarah Roper carried away more than ten pounds in household provisions and clothing before she was finally prosecuted in Ipswich court. The Denison household was a wealthy one, yet Patience Denison knew exactly what she owned and what was missing. In court, she gave an itemized list of everything Sarah Roper had taken from her, from a coif worth one shilling to apples and chicken pies worth ten. Sarah was a brazen thief, not content to fill a teacup or a pocket. In one year, she carried away nine bushels of wheat, trading it to neighbors for clothes and shoes. [33] Sarah's slander of her mistress suggests that for more than a year she had successfully exploited Patience Denison's own role anxieties.

As a wealthy and socially prominent member of her community, Patience Denison, like her mother Dorothy Dudley, was expected to be "a friendly neighbor pitiful to the poor." Sarah Roper suggested that she was in fact stingy, "an old Jew" insensitive to the serious distress of her near

neighbor Mary Bishop. As a household administrator, Patience Denison was supposed to be in firm command of her establishment, "to servants wisely awful, but yet kind." According to Sarah she was really little more than a "hobbling Joan" incapable of dealing with flagrant misbehavior in her own kitchen and pantry. Thus, to prosecute Sarah Roper--to reveal the full range of her servant's manipulations--was to expose her own inadequacies. Measured by the ideal, she had failed. Had she really been "charitable," wise," and "kind," none of this would have happened.

Patience Denison prosecuted her servant and collected damages. But as long as Sarah Roper remained in the neighborhood, in fact, as long as her reputation survived in the memories of Ipswich housewives, she could never be entirely rid of her. Nine years later, an Ipswich busybody named Elizabeth Hunt suspected Sarah of stealing her bodkin (an ornamental hairpin) after it fell to the floor during church. Although the bodkin was retrieved, Goody Hunt continued to press the grievance. Standing by the gate of the Denison house, she told another neighbor that she had been inside to talk to the Major about it, but that he would have nothing to do with it even though he was a magistrate. Sarah Roper could not come there to be examined, Goody Hunt reported, because Mistress Denison was "afraid of her." [34]

Patience Denison's troubles with Sarah Roper not only demonstrate the importance of the Rule of Charity, they also reveal the difficulties experienced by the New England gentry in maintaining a system of deference inherited from the old world. Even in a town like Ipswich, which was probably as stratified as any in New England, status was never assured. Men and women knew each other too well. Within a few hours, conversations held in the big houses could find their way across the back fence to the smaller houses nearby-[35] Pushy folks in some of those smaller houses--men and women like Samuel and Elizabeth Hunt--were ready to exploit the weaknesses of their betters and to challenge their authority.

When Daniel Denison ordered the troops to clear brush on the militia field on training day, Samuel Hunt led a small rebellion, insisting that the Major-General had no right to demand such common labor. He picked a fight with another of the gentry, Samuel Appleton, over the ownership of a horse. In the court actions which resulted, a rumor surfaced that Nathaniel Frowne had boasted he would soon down Appleton because he worked for Hunt, who "kept them like lords for they wanted neither for meat nor drink." Similar pride was evident a few years later when Hunt, negotiating the marriage of his daughter, boasted that he would give her "as good a portion . . . as any man in Ipswich

should give any of their daughters Except four or five."[36] Samuel Hunt was laying the foundations of a prosperity which in the next century would give his section of the neighborhood the name "Hunt's Cove." [37]

The Rule of Modesty prevented Elizabeth Hunt from such direct and open competition. She had clear ideas about what was appropriate for a woman in her position as well as obvious insecurities. She knew what was happening in every house in the neighborhood and she testified in almost every case emanating from her section of the town, but she was careful to tell the court, with some officiousness, that a certain bit of information had come from a housewife named Margaret Lambert who had appeared quite unexpectedly in her kitchen "on a sleeveless maid's errand, which was to get some scouring sand." [38] An aspiring matron could not run from house to house like a common maid. She must have more dignity.

When Elizabeth lost her bodkin, she imagined the servant Sarah Roper "picking her teeth" with it. [39] She recoiled from contact with the ignominious Sarah, yet the social structure of colonial Ipswich, which put Sarah's father, Walter Roper, on the same level as Samuel Hunt, placed the two women within a few inches of each other in the meeting house. Struggling to keep her baby quiet during the sermon, Elizabeth had taken the pin out of her hair and

given it to him to play with. When it dropped to the floor at an awkward angle, she was unable to retrieve it. She said Sarah picked it up. Sarah said it fell into the wide cuff of her sleeve, that she didn't find out until she got home, and that she sent it back promptly the next day. What might have been an innocent accident became in Elizabeth's mind an affront to her dignity.

If Elizabeth Hunt had little opportunity to become "known in the gates," she was certainly visible in the house of the Lord. That her struggle with Sarah Roper involved a personal ornament is in itself significant, but that it occurred in the meeting house tells us even more about the female world of colonial Ipswich. It is difficult for twentieth-century minds to comprehend the custom of "seating" the meeting, yet not until the period of the revolution did the majority of towns in New England abandon this visible ratification of hierarchical values.[39] Although a few men--and more women--challenged their place within this system, they did not challenge the system itself. As Ola Winslow has observed, seating plans and controversies preserved in town books, "spell out a long, slow story of aristocratic privilege and a sense of democratic fairness jostling each other within an ironclad system hospitable to neither." As the record shows, much of the jostling came from the female side of the room.[40]

One of the first controversies over seating in Ipswich is known only through a slander case which ended in the county court. A group of young blades in the town composed a satire which they circulated among the haymows. Entitled "O ye brave Undertakers & gallery makers," it apparently referred to a proposal initiated by a few of the solid freeman of the town to build a gallery for their wives. The refrain, which is all that is preserved of the poem, not so subtly slandered the social ambitions of the goodwives on the south side of the river. Although the clerk cautiously left off the names in the first line of the refrain, it is not too difficult to supply them:

Set aside Mistress [Symonds and Denison] [For]
Goode Rust, mother Woodward & Ann. Pray find me
such three again if you can.[41]

There is no way of knowing if "Symonds" and "Denison" are the missing surnames in the first line, but they fit the crude meter and rhyme as well as the theme of the satire. A town wag who wanted to poke fun at petty pride among the women of the congregation might well invoke the apparently untouchable eminence of the chief gentlewomen of the town.

The preeminence of women in meetinghouse controversies can be explained in both psychological and practical terms. Women lacked visible emblems of status. Since the meetinghouse was the one public arena open to them, it is hardly surprising that they acted out their search for

position there. On the other hand, their physical position in the building was quite literally an uncomfortable one. In towns like Ipswich, with a young and growing population, they were almost unbearably crowded. Their smallest children sat on their laps or wedged in beside them, while their older daughters perched on improvised benches crammed into the aisles. Their husband's benches were surely as hard and perhaps just as narrow, but men did not have to cope with wriggling distractions. It is little wonder that a woman like Elizabeth Hunt might succumb to the temptation to push and shove when her neighbor's daughter once again jammed her chair hard against the end of the bench. "Take notice of Goody Hunt," Thomas Knowlton cried aloud from the gallery--as if a dozen of her nearest neighbors had not already recorded both the pattern and the meaning of her behavior.[42]

In 1681, Samuel Hunt was among eight successful petitioners who sought liberty to "raise the hindmost seate in the norwest syde of the Meeting House two foote higher than it now is, for there wives to sitt in." [43] As the first families of the town began to sit together in pews, the distance between wealthy women and women of ordinary status became even more pronounced. If they could not sit with their husbands in a walled-off space, ambitious matrons like Elizabeth Hunt could at least sit together in elevated

dignity-

* * *

Although the cases of Goddy Quilter, Patience Denison, and Elizabeth Hunt occurred in a Puritan town in the second half of the seventeenth century, the underlying patterns of neighborliness which they illustrate were not limited to a single time or place. Although forms of interaction might vary, common assumptions remained. The Rule of Modesty determined that women involved in squabbles over the selection of a minister or the placing of a meeting house would act by indirection. The Rule of Charity, dictated that mistresses of the largest houses in the frontier towns would suffer "garrison crowds" during prolonged Indian conflict. Most widespread of all was the Rule of Industry. Though it may not be so recognized, that rule still operates in some New England towns three-hundred years later in the widespread female habit of knitting in public meetings. Such a practice surely goes back to a time when a woman's diligence was known and judged by all her neighbors. Carrying her "knitting work" about with her, a maidservant or a fishwife demonstrated the old proverb, "A man works from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done."

For an understanding of the colonial world, it is not the rules themselves which matter so much as the way those rules were challenged and enforced within the community of

women. Ipswich represents one form of community organization in northern New England, a stratified nuclear village with a strong church and a court at the center. Such a setting facilitated friendships among women, but it also undermined privacy, nurtured gossip, and reinforced the patriarchal authority of public institutions. Only close study of the spatial and social organization of neighborhoods can tell us how other forms of settlement affected women. Anne Bradstreet's "friendly neighbor" points toward one of the most important and least understood dimensions of female life in early America.

* * *

When Mary Belcher, the wife of the Massachusetts governor, died in October of 1736, all of the bells in Boston tolled. The coach which carried her body to the burial ground was draped in black velvet and adorned with escutcheons and coats of arms. Despite the pomp, perhaps even because of it, her minister emphasized in his funeral sermon that the elegant Mistress Belcher "was never above her Household Business." In a mournful elegy, a Boston versifier immortalized her beauty, her piety, her charity--and her favorite maxim of domestic economy:

Her House her happy skill no more shall boast,
"Be all things plentiful, but nothing lost." [44]

From a girlhood in Portsmouth and Newbury, Mistress Belcher had ascended to the crown of provincial society. Yet, in

New England, the governor's wife--like the spouse of the meanest fisherman on Smuttynose Island--was a housewife.

Housewives shared not only a common vocation but a common citizenship in the society of women. The funeral procession which followed Mary Belcher's body through the streets of Boston beautifully portrayed the importance of that society in her life. Closest to her coffin walked her "relatives," assembled "by degrees," but just behind them marched "a great many of the principal Gentlewomen in Town." Bringing up the rear were the ministers and the public officials who honored the governor by honoring his wife.[45] The society of women stood midway between the private world of the family and the public world of councils, courts, and counting houses. It was both hierarchal and personal. Mary Belcher was distinguished by "genteel Accomplishments" which few of her sisters shared, yet she did not "think Herself too rich to speak to the low and poor; but treated them, as well as others, with easy condescension, Courteousness and Gentleness." According to her minister, "some whole families were in large measure supported by her liberal Hand." [46] The Rules of Industry, Charity, and Modesty operated in eighteenth-century Boston as in seventeenth-century Ipswich, and in all probability they were both promulgated and enforced by a community of women.

1. Plymouth Court Records, III, 607. Quoted in Emily Harris, "'For the General Good. . .': Changing Institutions in the Town of Plymouth, Massachusetts, 1620-1700." Honors Thesis, Oberlin College, 1978.
2. Essex Probate, II, 302.
3. NH Court Papers, 5, 309.
4. Essex Files, III, 194.
5. Essex Files, III, 140.
6. Essex Files, III, 275.
7. Essex Files, V, 353.
8. Phillips, Salem in the Eighteenth Century, p. 175.
9. David H. Flaherty, Privacy in Colonial New England (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), p. 99.
10. Flaherty, Privacy, 111-112.
11. Essex Files, VIII, 286-287; New Hampshire Court Papers, V, 135.
12. Thomas Franklin Waters, Ipswich In The Massachusetts Bay Colony, (Ipswich: Ipswich Historical Society, 1905) p. 512-513.
13. Essex Files, VI, 425.
14. Edward S. Perzel, "Landholding in Ipswich," EIHC 104 (1968) 303, 322-324.

15. Waters, Ipswich, p. 113; Essex Files, IV, p. 240; V, 306. Robert J. Dinkin, "Seating The Meeting House In Early Massachusetts," New England Quarterly 43 (1970), 450-464, for general background on the custom of "seating." Dinkin sees the emergence of pews in the eighteenth century as a "major social change" placing women with their husbands for the first time. Waters says that the first pew was built in Ipswich in 1675.
16. Waters, pp. 108, 113, 424-427; John D. Cushing, "Town Commons of New England, 1640-1840," Old Time New England LI (Winter 1961), pp. 90-92.
17. Essex Files,
18. Waters, Ipswich, 131-133.
19. Essex Files, V, 38, 157.
20. Essex Files, V, 144-147.
21. Essex Files, 138, 141, 143, 147, 155, 186, 189, 218, 219, 220, 227, 283, 284, 292, 303, 306, 318, 413, 414.
22. Essex Files, V, 315; V, 155.
23. Essex Files, V, 414-417. Also see pp. 141, 143, 146, 218, 319.
33. Essex Files, V, 143-146. Ipswich Vital Records, I, 402; II, 467; Savage, Gen Dict., IV, 643; Waters, Ipswich, pp. 477, 443-454.
25. Waters, Ipswich, I, 442; NEHGR, VIII, 23. Essex Probate, I, 222-225; 167; III, 388; Sibley's Harvard Grads, I, 166-167, 170.
26. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, ed. The Salem Witchcraft Papers, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), I, 117-129.

27. Essex Files, IV, 141, 181; V, 31-33.
28. Essex Files, III, 140-141.
29. Essex Files, III, 193.
30. Waters, Ipswich, pp. 415, 439, 345. One of Sarah Roper's sisters married a member of the Dutch family; another married John Spark who rented half of Bishop's house. Essex Probate, III, 388-389.
31. Essex Files, III, 244-246.
32. Essex Files, III, 246.
33. Essex Files, III, 245.
34. Essex Files, IV, 239-242.
35. Essex Files, V, 155-157, in which Samuel Hunt reported a rumor that Thomas Knowlton had forged a bill for sugar and that Mr. William Hubbard had been to merchant Wainwrights to find out about it and that "it was also talked about at meeting or company tonight at the great house, Mr. Hubbard's."
36. Essex Files, ; V, 414; Docket 14262, Essex County Probate Office, 10 May 1692. Deposition of Ezekiel Northend.
37. Waters, Ipswich, 478-480, Map Number 5.
38. Essex Files, V, 231; IV, 240-243.
39. Dinkin, p. 462.

40. Ola Winslow, Meetinghouse Hill, 1630-1783; (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972, 1952), p. 143, pp. 144-146.
41. Essex Files, IV, 341.
42. Essex Files, V, 306-307; IV, 240-243.
43. Waters, Ipswich, 114. For another meeting house case see Essex Files, IV, 146. Coffin, Newbury, p. 167 says that in 1700 twenty persons were given permission to build pews for themselves and families.
44. Thomas Prince, Christ Abolishing Death, (Boston: 1736) pp. 39-41 and poem by Mather Byles appended to the sermon, p. 3. Mary Belcher was the daughter of William Partridge, formerly lieutenant governor of New Hampshire. In 1736, her widowed mother lived in Newbury. Her death was widely noted in Essex County. See Zaccheus Collins Diary, Essex Institute, 8th month 1736, and The Diaries of Benjamin Lynde and of Benjamin Lynde, Jr. (Boston: 1880) p. 89.
45. Extract from Boston Weekly Newsletter, October 14, 1736, in Prince, Christ Abolishing, pp. 41-42.
57. Prince, Christ Abolishing, p. 39.

Chapter Four

Pretty Gentlewomen

A central issue in the interpretation of early American huswifery is compressed in a letter which Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1727 to his younger sister Jane, who was about to marry.

I have been thinking what would be a suitable present for me to make, and for you to receive, as I hear you are grown a celebrated beauty. I had almost determined on a tea table, but when I considered that the character of a good housewife was far preferable to that of being only a pretty gentlewoman, I concluded to send you a spinning wheel, which I hope you will accept as a small token of my sincere love and affection.[1]

Good housewife versus pretty gentlewoman--such stereotypes color women's history even today. They were not original with Franklin, of course. Periodical literature of eighteenth-century England and America was filled with similar contrasts.[2] Moralists in every century have preferred "productive" to "ornamental" women. The underlying assumption, of course, is that the two roles are incompatible, that a woman must give up the homely duties of kitchen and barnyard to acquire the refinements of the parlour. Consider the traditional nursery rhyme:

Curly locks, curly locks, wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash dishes nor yet feed the swine,
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And feed upon strawberries, sugar and cream.

Curly locks, fine needlework, and strawberries typify the decorative frivolity conveyed in the phrase "pretty gentlewoman." The promise which jingles through the nursery rhyme dismayed moralists on both sides of the Atlantic in the eighteenth century as commercial expansion altered the material basis of life.

Probate inventories from northern New England document the appearance of new refinements in the region in the years between 1670 and 1730. Table linens multiplied, forks appeared where none had existed before, rooms became crowded with chairs, and the incidence of looking glasses increased tenfold. (see Table I) Had primping and crimping, chatting and tea drinking replaced the homely duties of kitchen and yard? Had industrious housewives, like "curly locks" in the nursery rhyme, given up their essential work and become ornamental? Not so. The mistresses of the largest houses in eighteenth-century New England were increasingly involved in the elaboration and celebration of leisure and in the ornamentation of private spaces. But so were silversmiths, upholsterers, japanners, and painters. No one had yet called them ornamental. For a few women the focus of huswifery shifted, but for almost all women, the Rule of Industry prevailed.

A close examination of daily work in the diary of one eighteenth-century gentlewoman shows how themes of gentility intermeshed with industrious housekeeping even for women near the height of polite society in a commercial town. Mary Vial Holyoke was the daughter of a Boston merchant and the wife of a Salem gentleman, Edward Augustus Holyoke, a casual versifier and serious physician who was a member of the town's economic and intellectual elite.[3] The Holyokes joined the barbecues, dances, teas, and "turtles" of the Essex County gentry, yet each of the four major housekeeping roles is clearly apparent in Mary's diary, as this selection of entries from the 1760's shows:

Service and maintenance: "Washed." "Ironed" "Scoured pewter." "Scoured rooms." "Scoured furniture Brassed & put up the Chintz bed & hung pictures." "Burnt 5 Chimnies." "Opened cask of Biscuit." "Began a Barrel of flour." "Began upon 22 lb of chocolate." "Dressed a Calves Head turtle fashion."

Agriculture: "Sowed sweet marjoram." "Sowed pease." "Sowed coliflower." "Sowed 6 w[ee]ks beans." "Pulled first radishes." "Set out turnips & stumps." "Cut 36 asparagus, first cutting here." "Bought 11 Ducks." "Hen began to set." "Bought a pig to keep, weighed 12 1/2 lb." "Bought of Wm Williams a Doe rabbit. . .she brought forth 6 young ones 3 of which died."

Manufacturing: "Killd the pig, weighed 164 lb. Aetatus 11 months." "Salt Pork, put Bacon in Pickle." "Put Bacon up chimney." "Put Beef in Pickle." "Preserved quinces. Made syrup of cores and parings." "Made two Barrels of Soap." "Filled Bed." "Made mead." "Bottled wine, 6 doz." "Preserved Damson, a week too late." "Made the Dr. six Cravata marked H." "Quilted 2 [fetti]Coats since yesterday 11 oCloxk A.M." "Made 5 Shirts in a fortnight for ye Doctor, Besides other things."

Trade: "Bought salmon." "Bought tea 1 lb." "Laid in 77 lbs. cf butter for the winter in November." "Bought 9 lb. Candles." "Bought sheets." "Bought Bengall gown, plates and Cruets." "Bought a Baize Coat." "First began to take milk at Jno. Felt, 3 pints per Day." "Bought linnen for the Doctor." [4]

The diary shows the persistence of common chores in a sophisticated Salem household of the mid-eighteenth century. If nothing else, it demonstrates that the elaboration of the house might simply mean more work for the housekeeper. Mary Holyoke washed and ironed, but she also polished brasses and hung pictures. Even in this urban setting, she was intensely involed in agriculture. In one year she cut 1836 heads of asparagras from May 10 until June 10! She did not indicate whether she served it, sold it, pickled it, gave it away, or buried it in the cellar in a crock of clarified

butter as one ancient cockhock recommended.[5] But she was obviously proud of her productivity. Her involvement with barnyard animals is perhaps more surprising. She did not keep a cow, but she found it profitable to raise her own pork as well as poultry and rabbits. Surplus fruit, large quantities of meat, and excess fat determined that she would be a manufacturer as well. Her autumn schedule included many of the tasks common to rural women a hundred years before. Because she lived in a seaport, she could purchase provisions as well as some items of clothing, but this abundance of consumer goods simply created higher standards without really relieving her of responsibility. She purchased gowns and sheets, but she also stitched her husband's shirts and embroidered his cravats.

Mary Vial Holyoke was a "good housewife." She undoubtedly had servants, yet the form of entry in her diary demonstrates that she considered scouring, salting, planting, plain sewing, and ironing as her work whether she took every stitch or covered every seed herself. She was also a "pretty gentlewoman." She did not spin, and she frequently sat at tea with friends. Clearly the two roles which were set in opposition in Franklin's letter to his sister Jane were quite compatible in real life. Pretty gentlewomen simply refined the skills which all good housewives shared. To a knowledge of plain sewing and

common cockery, they added a concern for grace and style. Mary Holyoke was a gentlewoman not just because she had wine and silver on her table but because she was interested enough in the fine points of cooking to "dress" a calf's head "turtle fashion" rather than simply drop it into the pot. Her gentility determined that she would spend at least some of her time updating and remodeling her clothing, that she could afford to send a piece of silk to England to be dyed and "water'd with large water," and that she would know how to monogram as well as construct her husband's scarves.

Embellishment. Refinement. Polish. These are the key motifs. A gentlewoman in eighteenth-century New England knew how to pen letters, cast up household accounts, and embroider in silk and wool. She cultivated roses as well as cabbages, manufactured sweet meats as well as bacon, and, if she were advanced, she may occasionally have perused a volume of Paradise Lost or The Spectator as well as reading daily in her Bible. She was distinguished from common housewives--as gentlewomen in New England had always been--by specialized skills, a more complex setting, a wider area of authority and responsibility, but especially by an attitude, an enlarged sense of her own worth.

Ursula Cutt, a New Hampshire widow who died in August of 1694, was a gentlewoman not only by virtue of wealth and her late husband's high position in the province, but

because of the kind of things she kept in a chest of drawers in her Portsmouth house. Her probate inventory allows us to rummage among her belongings, at least in imagination. In the upper drawer of her chest was a mounted "pin quishing" (cushion) with its own little drawer beneath containing silver thimbles and an English half crowne. Twelve dozen silver and gold breast buttons, a spoon, a pair of "agget pendants," and remnants of stitching and sewing silk were kept beside it. Perhaps the silk had been used for the "fine wrought Coverings for Cushins not made up" which were listed elsewhere in her house. Her second drawer also held jewelry (a necklace of "scale Seed perle" and four gold rings) plus some of her best "wearing linen," cambrick aprons, fine sleeves, caps and neckerchiefs. It may have been awhile since she had sorted to the bottom of this drawer--her old "knitt wascot" was clearly "moth eaten," though still worth ten shillings. In the third drawer were remnants of old silk and several small swatches of silver lace, perhaps the ends of that which trimmed her blue satin petticoat. The fourth drawer was stuffed with cloth and clothing of all descriptions, from a length of homespun wool to "One Tufted holland Cloak with silver Clasps." A red baby blanket and a tiny cloak lined with silk may have been sentimental keepsakes. The obvious luxury implied by this assemblage of fabrics and trinkets should not mislead us.

Mistress Cutt was killed by Indians while haying on her Dover farm.[6]

Clothing had always been important to the gentry. Sumptuary laws, aimed at suppressing "excess" in apparell, made exceptions for the quality, for whom gold and silver lace, knots of ribbon, silk hoods, and embroidered "bands" (collars) were legitimate badges of distinction.[7] Though a fisherman's wife might pull on a kersey petticoat and lace a leather bodice over her coarse linen shift, a gentleman's wife would own "coats" of damask or satin as well as of wool and her bodied bodice might be of flowered silk. She might be as thrifty as any other housewife, though the top crust of her "lumber" (giblet) pie could be ornamented with a decorative vent. Such simple refinements distinguished her from the common sort.

Even the grandest gentlewoman would be familiar with the poultry yard, though her home remedies could include peacock as well as chicken dung, and she would probably have a formula for removing freckles as well as for curing stomachache. Any wife could boil beef. A gentlewoman could also make catsup from wild mushrooms and conserve from garden roses (one old recipe called for three pounds of sugar for every pound of petals snipped and pounded in a mortar), and between the carefully marked linens in her case of drawers, she would tuck "sweet bags" filled with herbs

and spices. After a morning in the asparagras patch, a truly pretty gentlewoman might sponge herself with a mixture of white wine and rose water to remove the "stench under the Armholes." [8]

She would have acquired these arts by working alongside a well-polished dame, first her own mother but almost always a number of other women as well, in the beginning a skilled neighbor, who might help her take the first stitches on the cross-stitch "marking sampler" which would be the earliest product of her education, and finally, if she were fortunate, a gentlewoman of Boston, a woman like Elizabeth Oliver, perhaps, who would introduce her to polite society as well as initiate her into the advanced skills of fancy work, cookery, and letters. [9] In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, Mistress Cliver, a granddaughter of one Massachusetts governor and the sister of another, kept a home renowned as a "Nursery both of Genteel and Virtuous Accomplishments." Here the daughters of country ministers or city merchants might come for "the perfecting of their Education." The most famous of her pupils was Mary Hurst, the orphaned granddaughter of the diarest Samuel Sewall. At sixteen Mary began boarding at the Oliver home, acquiring the skills and the outlook which would serve her later as Lady Pepperrell of Kittery Point. [9]

In Boston a young woman had access to private tutors and teachers of needlework, waxwork, dancing, or music. An extended stay in the metropolis would send her home to Andover or Kittery or Newbury with new ideas, new acquaintances, and new evidence of her accomplishments--a quillwork scone, for example, a tufted bedrug, or an elaborate framed picture worked in tent stitch on canvas.[11] Needlework, like fine furniture, might pass from mother to daughter, carrying a tradition of domestic achievement from one generation to the other. In September of 1750, for example, an eighty-eight-year-old grandmother, Elizabeth Appleton of Ipswich, wrote a letter of congratulations to Margaret Holyoke, who had recently married. "I hear you have got a good Husband and plenty of the good things of this life," she began, counseling her granddaughter not to set her heart too much upon the things of the world but at the same time expressing the hope that she had received "the chairs I lent your dear mother and some other good things she had and her work the coat of arms." [12] Mistress Holyoke's "coat of arms" validated both the status of the family and the skill of the maker.

Though needlework and other crafts were important throughout the colonial period, in the eighteenth century there were new interests to distract the young gentlewomen of coastal New England. At midcentury, a Boston engraver

named John Greenwood painted the women of his family with a volume of The Spectator as well as with a length of flame-stitch embroidery.[13] English periodicals and novels offered edification as well as diversion. In 1728, the first minister at Fennacook carried "Eight books titled the Spectator" into the New Hampshire wilderness.[14] Lady Pepperrell of Kittery seems to have preferred sermons, but her son Andrew owned several volumes of the Female Spectator by Eliza Heywood, a female imitator of Addison. Heywood's novel The Virtuous Villager amused Margaret Holyoke and her brother Edward Augustus in the spring of 1747. "Peggy" was as interested in literature as "'gustus" and sometimes answered his verse epistles with rhymes of her own.[15]

The most popular of the English authors was Samuel Richardson, whose Pamela was a best-selling volume at a Boston book auction in 1744. Richardson's story of the country maid who resisted her master until he made her his Lady might have aroused the aspirations of servant girls--had they been able to read. In New England, Richardson's novels were considered fit fare for young gentlewomen. Pamela was after all no common maid, but a skilled seamstress and penwoman whose service in the household of a lady had developed many of the refinements she would need as a mistress. When a neighbor lent the novel to Ebenezer Parkman's daughter, he picked it up and

read it through. As a minister, he insisted that "these sort of Books are indeed to be read Sparingly," but he agreed that they might have some utility for "Such as are bred in the Country & cant be afforded to live at Boarding Schools." [17] Pamela's virtues--and her epistolary style--were worth imitating in an age when letter writing, including the difficult art of penmanship, was becoming an important emblem of gentility. By the middle of the eighteenth century, girls like Peggy Holyoke were learning to guide their pens with almost as much assurance as their brothers. [18]

Such accomplishments may have been less practiced after marriage, however, for the most notable skill of the pretty gentlewoman was neither embroidering on canvas nor composing charming letters but managing an establishment which by eighteenth-century standards included a large staff and a significant budget. The houses of the gentry were as impressive as most public buildings in eighteenth-century America and for good reason. Balls and dinners, teas and barbecues frequently served political and business as well as social ends. Although husbands undoubtedly acted as overseers of accounts, eighteenth-century grandees like William Pepperrell, Archibald Macphedris, Benjamin Lynde, William Brown, or Benning Wentworth were too much involved in outside affairs to have concerned themselves with the day

to day running of a house. That task belonged to wives, who with a staff of farmer's daughters, West Indian slaves, and neighbor's children turned out fine dinners and gracious "entertainments" so important to public life and so casually noted in the diaries of gentlemen.[19] While her husband was still in camp at Louisburg after the successful siege of the French fortress, Mary Pepperrell worried whether he was keeping a "general's table." Without a wife, a gentleman might forget the small rituals which ratified or eroded one's position in this heirarchical society-[20]

"Curly locks, curly locks, wilt thou be mine?/ Thou shalt not wash dishes nor yet feed the swine." Our first response to the stereotypes posed in the nursery rhyme must be a simple denial. To "sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam" required more than skill with a needle. Although wealth eliminated some tasks, it brought others which within their own setting were just as functional, just as essential to survival. A pretty gentlewoman might "feed upon strawberries" (and olives of beef and calves-head jelly!) but not without effort.

We cannot so summarily dismiss the comments of men like Franklin, however. We have described here a rather static role, one which existed in 1650 as in 1750 and which appeared in country towns as well as in commercial centers. Obviously, there were wide variations in "gentility" as it

was translated into the lives of New England women. Setting was one source of difference. When the first Scotch-Irish settlers arrived at West Running Brook in New Hampshire in 1719, a man named John Morrison supposedly looked over his land and confided to his wife that he imagined their house would have to be of logs, like all of the neighbors.

"Awell, awell, dear John," she reportedly answered, "an it maun be a log house, do make it a log heegher nor the lave" (higher than the rest). [21] Mistress Morrison understood the nature of gentility in early New England. It was not what one had or even what one did which mattered so much as one's position in relation to the neighbors. A woman who valued herself and who managed to notch up her material setting "a log heegher nor the lave" might become a gentlewoman. The gentility of West Running Brook was not the gentility of Portsmouth, of course. At the very same time that Mistress Morrison was nesting in a temporary log house, Mistress Sarah Macphaedis, the wife of a Piscataqua merchant, was greeting guests on Daniel Street in a four-story brick mansion filled with English furniture and staffed by slaves. [22] In relation to Mistress Macphaedis, Mistress Morrison might look like a good housewife; in relation to her neighbors she might have seemed a "pretty gentlewoman."

A second variable was religion. There was nothing in New England Puritanism to deny the better sort their fine houses, silk petticoats, and embroidered cushions (after all God had given such folks ascendancy and expected them to maintain it for the good of society), but any religion which asserts the primacy of spirit over flesh, which emphasizes personal piety, and which attaches special significance to the sin of pride, will reverberate in material life. A poem which Ann Bradstreet wrote after her house was burned exemplifies the ambivalence of one wealthy and pious New England gentlewoman. As she passed the ruins of her once beautiful home, she thought of all the "pleasant things" she had lost. "Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest:/ There lay that store I counted best." Even as she lingered over her memories, however, her heart chided her for fixing her hopes on "mouldring dust," when her real mansion stood above.

There's wealth enough, I need no more;
Farewell my Pelf, farewell my Store.
The world no longer let me love,
My hope and Treasure lies Above.[23]

A woman who considered earthly possessions as "Pelf" might fix her attention on necessary duties rather than on decorative refinements, unless of course those refinements had religious significance as reading and writing may have done.

Considered as opposing tendencies rather than as absolute categories, the stereotypes of "good housewife" and "pretty gentlewomen" have considerable validity in northern New England. The gentry were just close enough to the wilderness to flaunt their civilization, yet most of them were near enough to middle class (and often Puritan) origins to be anxious about their own gentility. The unique geographic and religious inheritance of early New England determined that the role of pretty gentlewoman would always be threatened by the insistent demands of industrious--and pious--huswifery.

* * *

A unique collection of letters from a mother to her daughter illustrates the importance of setting in early New England. It also reinforces the point which we made in the last chapter about the dependence of women in the big houses upon the labor of young daughters in the neighborhood. Elizabeth Saltonstall of Haverhill, like Patience Denison of Ipswich, was the wife of the most prominent man in her town. Nathaniel Saltonstall, like Daniel Denison, was a magistrate and a militia commander. He was also the son of one of the few titled settlers of Massachusetts, yet his wife had little opportunity for genteel pretensions. In the 1680's, Haverhill, unlike Ipswich, was still a frontier town. As late as 1708, an attack by French and Indians reached the

meeting house at the center of the village. Furthermore, it was far less compact than Ipswich and servant girls were even harder to find. In the worst seasons, it was hard to get any maid at all, not even a girl like Sarah Roper.

Fortunately, Mistress Saltonstall was still relatively young and energetic, and she had been trained by a sober mother to value good housekeeping more than gentility. Still, she knew the responsibilities of her class. When her only daughter, sixteen-year-old Elizabeth, had an opportunity to accompany her father to Boston in the spring of 1684, she could not keep her at home. The dairy season was upon them, the garden needed planting, but Elizabeth also needed cultivation. The little boys were still at home, of course, and Betsey Warner was a good maid. But within a few days of Elizabeth's departure, Betsey's mother called her home--the family was sick and needed help. "Were it not that I aime at your good I should not be willing to deny myself as I do," Mistress Saltonstall wrote her daughter late in May, urging her to improve the time that had cost her mother so dearly.

I have put all the silk I could find in a box and sent it with your other things. Intreat my cozine Clark if she can to procure you some silk. We will willingly satisfy her for it and for her paines in teaching you. It would be a very great trouble to me you should use your precious time or any way mispend it. Consider what a precious talent time is and what a strict account you must another day give for it.[24]

If Elizabeth could not help with the churning in Haverhill,

she could at least sit on a cushion in Boston and learn to embroider.

Five years later, Elizabeth had married a young minister of Ipswich, Patience Denison's grandson, John. Whether life was actually easier in town than on the frontier is difficult to determine, but in Mistress Saltonstall's view, her daughter had embarked upon housekeeping with more enthusiasm than judgement. "Your father tells me when he was last at Ipswich you were thinking of hiring cows which I am truly troubled at," she wrote.

You have those near you that are better able to advise than I am but you will certainly find great inconvenience to take such businesses upon your hand and forced to hire all your help. . . . If it be not done already you may be sensible by your own experience how unsteady servants are therefore little encouragements to keep a great dairy.

In a postscript, the mother added, "I have according to your desire sent the flax and hemp seed but almost wish I had not. . . . you will find it difficult to hire help in season." [25] In time, Elizabeth would learn to balance her housekeeping responsibilities with her other duties as a minister's wife and a mother. When John Denison died, shortly after the birth of a son, Elizabeth married Rowland Cotton, the parson at Sandwich. Now her mother's letters from Haverhill would be directed to Cape Cod--but the same themes would persist and the complaints grow more insistent.

In the late summer of 1694, Haverhill was under siege as King William's War penetrated the northern frontier. "Our house is filled Top-full, and but one roome left free for a stranger," Nathaniel Saltonstall wrote the Cottons on August 23. Ten days later Elizabeth scratched a hasty note to her daughter. Sixty persons were billeted in the house, she said, as well as "ould Jersey." By October, the family was still in "garison crowds; and more than a little...busie about Cyder, and winter apples." With all those FOLKS around, there was plenty of help for common chores. As winter SETTLED in, however, farmer's wives and their children went home, though the soldiers stayed. The family had been preserved from both the French and Indians, Nathaniel wrote to Rowland Cotton in February, but "yet have the cumber and trouble to my only Maid, i.e. Wife, dayly to be cook and to our great charg to provide billets for 4 men posted with me." [26] Young women who might otherwise have helped in the Saltonstall kitchen were probably at home helping their own mothers feed soldiers--or perhaps just trying to catch up on work neglected during the autumn alarm.

Elizabeth Saltonstall not only had difficulty playing the role of "pretty gentlwomen," she also had trouble doing the ordinary cooking, sewing, washing, and churning expected of a "good housewife." She had few of the privileges but

most of the responsibilities of gentility. Because her husband was militia commander she was responsible for billeting soldiers. Because her house was one of the largest in the coastal town she had to open it to strangers. Because her daughter was destined to be a gentleWOMAN and her sons to graduate from Harvard, she had to part with them when they might have been of most help. At least one of her sons was glad to be away from home. Writing from Cambridge to his sister in Sandwich, Richard Saltonstall said, "Last week we heard from Haverhil, all Well and in health, but much thronged with Children and Lice; which discourages our taking a Journey thither." [27] Mistress Saltonstall complained, but she apparently never questioned her duty, though late in autumn after the Indian alarms were over and the lice and children removed, she balked at carrying on alone as mistress of the manor while her husband took a journey south. Nathaniel wrote to the Cottons that he was sorry he wouldn't be able to visit them at Cape Cod. A Thanksgiving had been appointed, he explained, "and, if I had withdrawn, my wife would not have provided any entertainment, which I was very loth should be omitted; because I have more than . . . one friend in Haverhill." [28] Because her husband was a convivial man as well as a magistrate, Elizabeth Saltonstall could not neglect normal hospitality even after an autumn of abnormal

exertion.

The diary of Joseph Green, minister at Salem Village (now Danvers) at the turn of the eighteenth century, suggests that at least one of Mistress Saltonstall's trials, the disappearance of maids, was not confined to the frontier. Since most household servants were young women in their late teens or early twenties, the so-called "servant problem" was intimately related to the high rate of marriage in New England. Whether this was seen as a "problem" or as an "opportunity" for women depends upon one's perspective. The relative abundance of land which made it possible for most women to become "good housewives" made it difficult for a few women to become "pretty gentlewomen." The solution which the Greens finally arrived at became increasingly common in the eighteenth century.

Elizabeth Green kept her first maid almost a year and a half. When Priscillas Lynn married the son of a local farmer, she and Joseph "made a supper for them." After all, marriage was the usual fate of young maids. The next servant, Ann Hodgen, seems to have been competent enough. Elizabeth had time to make conserved roses when Joseph's sister "Nanny" came to visit and after one public Thanksgiving in June, she set a table for thirty guests, including a number of visiting ministers. Before long, Ann Hodgen too "went away." [29] The disappearance of servants

apparently grew more frequent, for in 1708 Joseph wrote in the separate commonplace book which he reserved for births, deaths, and "remarkable providences" that "We have this winter lived mostly without any boy or maid because we could not procure any and yet God hath carried us along from day to day with great comfort and when things HAVE seemed to go agt us, we have often seen reason to say that all was for the best." This pious resignation did not last. On March 30, when Elizabeth Green was eight months pregnant with her sixth child, Joseph "went to Salem and bought an Indian for 32 pounds." [30]

By 1750 there were a few slaves in most New England towns, even on the frontier. In December of 1746, Timothy Walker, minister to the settlement of Pennacook, New Hampshire, recorded that he "bought a negro wench." [31] Perhaps Mistress Walker, like Elizabeth Green, had grown tired of searching for farmer's daughters. Not surprisingly, slaves appeared first--and in greatest concentrations--in the highly self-conscious commercial towns. According to one estimate, every sixth household in Portsmouth in 1729 had a slave. [32] For the merchant elite of Piscataqua slaves were simply part of an increasingly elaborate material setting. Stretching for position, they pulled away from THE tradition of village interdependence which had placed Sarah Roper in the kitchen of Patience

Denison, which had filled Elizabeth Saltonstall's beds with strangers, and which continued to define the lives of most women in the country towns-[33]

Sometime after 1720, for example, William Pepperrell of Kittery Point extensively remodeled (or perhaps even rebuilt) the seventeenth-century garrison house which he had inherited from his father, creating a "country seat" which in provincial Maine must have seemed an image of baronial splendour, with its finely paneled rooms, its "deer park," its family tomb ornamented with a coat of arms, its orderly gardens reaching to the countinghouse and wharves below, and its liveried black servants-[34]

Yet in northern New England, such splendour was a thin veneer. In the newly settled towns of the interior, would-be gentlewomen faced many of the same problems that had troubled Elizabeth Saltonstall sixty years before and in country parsonages at the end of the eighteenth century, the absence of a maid could be every bit as troubling as it had been for Elizabeth Green three-quarters of a century earlier. In 1782, Ruth Belknap, wife of the minister at Dover, composed a poem entitled, "The Pleasure of a Country Life...written when I had a true taste of them by having no maid." Because it so vividly portrays the continuity of female life in rural New England, it is worth quoting at length.

Up in the morning I must rise
 Before I've time to rub my eyes.
 With half-pin'd gown, unbuckled shoe,
 I haste to milk my lowing cow.
 But, Oh! it makes my heart to ake,
 I have no bread till I can bake,
 And then, alas! it makes me sputter,
 For I must churn or have no butter.
 The hogs with swill too I must serve;
 For hogs must eat or men will starve.
 Besides, my spouse can get no cloaths
 Unless I much offend my nose.
 For all that try it know it's true
 There is no smell like colouring blue.
 Then round the parish I must ride
 And make enquiry far and wide
 To find some girl that is a spinner,
 Then hurry home to get my dinner. . . .

All summer long I toil & sweat,
 Blister my hands, and scold & fret.
 And when the summer's work is o'er,
 New toils arise from Autumn's store.
 Corn must be husk'd, and pork be kill'd,
 The house with all confusion fill'd.
 O could you see the grand display
 Upon our annual butchering day,--
 See me look like ten thousand sluts,
 My kitchen spread with grease & guts,--
 YOU'D lift your hands surpris'd, & swear
 That Mother Trisket's self were there.

Ye starch'd up folks that live in town,
 That lounge upon your beds till noon,
 That never tire yourselves with work,
 Unless with handling knife & fork,
 Come, see the sweets of country life,
 Display'd in Parson E[elknap's] wife"[35]

The parson's wife was exaggerating, of course, poking fun at the pastoral convention of late eighteenth-century verse. That she had time to rhyme her frustration suggests that her problems were neither as serious nor as prolonged as those of Elizabeth Saltonstall or Elizabeth Green. Yet both women would have recognized the world she described.

* * *

In a region settled by Puritans and eventually shattered by revolution sharp contrasts between "good housewives" and "pretty gentlemen" cannot be entirely explained in terms of geography or economics. In an analysis of the journal of Esther Burr, a daughter of Jonathan Edwards, the famous theologian and preacher of western Massachusetts, Laurie Crumpacker has described the ambivalence of one Puritan woman toward housework. "I must submit," Burr wrote, complaining of her domestic duties. "My time is not my own but Gods." Her burdens were genuine, yet Crumpacker suggests that some of her problems, including her inability to keep a maid, may have derived in part from impossible standards and from her own need to spend herself in service. She patterned herself after the industrious housewife of Proverbs whose candle burned far into the night and who nevertheless rose before dawn.[36]

Think for a moment of Elizabeth Saltonstall confined with her jersey cow and lice-infested neighbors in a garrison in Haverhill, dutifully mixing bread and scouring pots, all the while complaining about the unreliability of servants and thanking God for her preservation from the enemy. Think too of Elizabeth Green, heavy with her sixth child, walking into her house one noon in January, with no maid in sight, to find ten unexpected visitors from Salem.

Did she, like her husband, thank God for his mercy in adversity? Certainly they would have understood the central message of the dozens of Indian captivity narratives published in these years: the Lord gives no trial to the faithful that will not in the end prove a blessing. For such women, the world was a wilderness, life a pilgrimage, and huswifery a laborious but essential calling. In various modes this view survived the colonial period in New England, though it was continually threatened and sometimes infused with a rival psychology which saw the earth as at least potentially a garden, life as art, and huswifery as a means to more gracious and comfortable living.

It may be then that key differences in housekeeping roles were determined not so much by setting or by wealth as by something as intangible and as difficult to measure as temperament. Philip Greven has recently attempted a major analysis of cultural conflict in revolutionary America in just such terms, stressing the continuity of "evangelical," "moderate," and "genteel" personality types from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries.[37] One need not accept Greven's precise formulations to recognize the validity of his approach. Two sets of documents dating from the middle of the eighteenth century show strikingly different attitudes toward the most ordinary of a housewife's tasks--providing suitable clothing for her

children. Mary Holyoke of Cambridge was obviously a "moderate" in Greven's terms. Mary Gilman of Exeter was an "evangelical."

On May 1, 1755, Mary Holyoke's husband Edward wrote to their "dear Child," Edward Augustus Holyoke of Salem. Augustus, who was then in his late twenties, was about to be married, a circumstance which had sent his mother back and forth to Boston almost daily, hastening from tailor to dry goods shop and then to her married daughter for consultation. Engaged in the important business of dressing her son, Mrs. Holyoke was too busy to write. Her husband, who was then president of Harvard College, was not. "Your Mother desires me to write you what she hath already done in your Affairs," he began, carefully detailing each item his wife had purchased and her reasons for doing so. She had found cloth and trimming for a coat but had been unable to secure any blue satin. Perhaps this was just as well, for "Mr Loughton where she bo't the Cloth saies that he reckoned a white Sattin wou'd suit the Colcur of the coat better & be much more genteel." She had purchased four pair of cotton stockings, though "as to silk stockings, she cannot light of any, but what very ordinary, besides your Sister Mascarene saies you had better not have any, for that they are not fashionable, & People in the highest dress wear no other than Cotton." [38]

For Mary Holyoke of Cambridge, gentility was an easy expectation. For Mary Gilman of Exeter, New Hampshire it represented a spiritual threat. On January 7, 1753, Joseph Gilman, a young clerk in the counting house of a Boston merchant, wrote to his mother asking for stockings, shirts, and "britches." At fifteen, Joseph was discovering for himself the cultural chasm between Country and Town. His own anxieties were focused upon clothes. In August he had written for shirts--one a week simply wouldn't do--and had even suggested having a broadcloth jacket made by a tailor and if possible a "handsome" pair of black breeches. "I do not desire you to send my homespun Cloth coulerd Jacket if you do I shall not wear it," he had fussed. In September, he again requested shirts, perhaps with little result, for in November's letter he moderated his demand for "seven good Shirts bag Holland sleeves." "I do not care whether my Shirts are bag Holland or no if they will wash white, nor do I care how few Shirts I have so I can have a clean one when I want it," he told his mother. Since she had been "blamed by some for giving me too good Cloaths," he assured her that he shared her values, that he only desired to "dress neat and Clean but not fine." But by January his frustration was obvious. What was suitable for Exeter simply would not do in Boston, a fact his mother seemed not to understand.

If it would be of any service I would send home one of my Shirts that I have wore a week and tried to Keep clean as far as it Lay in my power; Pride is

not the occasion of my writing thus for I seriously declare I never took less pains to dress than I now do, I am forced to go with holes in my stockings very often.

He would be grateful for half a dozen good worsted stockings. As for shirts, if his mother couldn't afford Holland, then checked would have to do.[39]

Joseph's struggles to achieve dignity continued. By summer he seems to have settled on checked shirts, but he vowed never again to wear shoes made in Exeter. "I scarce ever saw a worse pair. . . than the last you sent me," he wrote. Lest she imagine that pride was at the root of his continual demands for stockings, he couched June's request in terms good housekeeping could hardly deny: "my feet sweat so that when I have wore a pair of stockings three or four days they are stiff that I can scarce wear them." [40]

There were obvious economic differences between the two pairs of mothers and sons. Joseph Gilman was descended from two of Exeter's most prominent merchant families, but he was still a young apprentice and his mother a widow.[41] Augustus Holyoke, on the other hand, was already established in a profession. The difference in world view, however, is even more apparent. The elder Holyoke was a genial minister whose personal diary includes notes on candle making but nothing on the spiritual state of his youthful flock. Nicholas Gilman, Joseph's father, had been a troubled evangelical whose search for salvation had

triggered one of the most ardent "awakenings" in New England. Edward Holyoke lined up his children annually to record their weight; Nicholas Gilman continually tested his sons' growth toward conversion-[42] Little wonder that Joseph defended himself against the charge of "pride."

Significantly, Joseph Gilman's conflicts with his mother centered on clothing. From the days of the Puritan "round heads," apparel and differences in hairstyling had symbolized deeper commitments. New England was periodically rocked by conflict over changes in fashion. As late as 1752, church members in Newbury met together to discipline a brother named Richard Bartlett who refused communion with the church "for no other reason but because the Pastor wears a wig." To the dismay of most members, who had long since become accustomed to seeing horsehair and powder on the heads of the godly, Bartlett insisted that wig-wearers who refused to repent would "certainly be damned." [43]

Women's clothing aroused even stronger feelings. One of the first attacks on female fashions in New England was written in 1647 by Elizabeth Saltonstall's grandfather, Nathaniel Ward, whose Simple Ccblcr of Aggawam insisted that Zion's daughters had already been disfigured by French fashion, which "transclouts them into gantbargeese, ill-shapen-shotten shell fish, Egyptian Hyroglyphicks, or at the best into French flurts of the pastery." It should

"breake the hearts of English-men," he continued, "to see so many goodly English-women imprisoned in French Cages, peering out of their hoodholes for some man of mercy to help them with a little wit." [44] A woman who lavished too much attention on her own person violated the Rule of Modesty whether or not she also broke the Rule of Industry.

If we could somehow walk into an eighteenth-century meeting house and see all of the inhabitants of a town dressed in their best and seated by rank, we would probably learn more about cultural and social divisions than by months of shuffling town records. Even after a century of supposed "levelling" and long after the sumptuary laws were abandoned, clothing carried subtle clues to values and status. These have only been partly transmitted in written records. We know, for example, that in 1722, before her marriage to William Pepperrell, Mary Hurst shocked her country cousins by appearing in York in "fashionable clothing," [45] but what was the exact nature of her offense? Was her gown cut too low? Was the fabric too sumptuous? Or--scandalous thought--had she succumbed to the vanity of a "hoop-petticoat," a novelty singled out for attack in the Boston press that very year. "Is not Pride of Apparel an Evidence of a proud Heart?" the anonymous author had thundered. [46] The opposite of Franklin's "good housewife" was not just "gentlewoman" but a "pretty

gentlewoman." Clothes distinguished the better sort from the commonality, but they also distinguished the proud from the virtuous.

In the next fifty years, that ancient sin of pride would acquire political connotations. When the "Daughters of Liberty" brought down their spinning wheels from their attics, they were responding to a moral imperative as well as to a practical need.[47] Abandoning their "top knots of pride" they renounced the luxury of a corrupt England, demonstrating that the descendants of the saints had not forgotten the lesson of Bathsheba, "She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness."

One antidote to the sin of pride was industrious labor--what could be more chaste, modest, and productive than homely spinning, the necessary occupation of the poor and the young? But another remedy was exemplary piety. Gentlewomen of Puritan persuasion, like Anne Bradstreet, might turn from pelf to pen, ornamenting mind and spirit rather than body. Copying sermons or composing private meditations was one thing, of course. Publishing books was another. English society did not expect women to become authors, as Bradstreet knew. In the prologue to The Tenth Muse she wrote:

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits,
A Poets pen all scorn thus bring,
For such despite they cast on Female wits:
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,

They'l say it's stoln, or else it was by
chance-[48]

Those "carping tongues" did not belong to the Puritan
intelligentsia of northern New England, however.

Bradstreet's poems were presented to the world by a Newbury
minister, her brother-in-law John Woodbridge, and prefaced
by commendatory verses from half a dozen other males,
including Nathaniel Ward, Bradstreet's former neighbor in
Ipswich, who seems to have been relieved that she had not
joined these "French flurts of the pastery," he so
deplored.[49]

The text of Cotton Mather's Ornaments for the Daughters
of Zion, first published in 1691, was verse thirty of
Proverbs chapter thirty-one: "Favour is Deceitful, and
Beauty is Vain: but A woman that heareth the Lord, she 'tis,
that shall be praised." Mather upheld the expected social
roles described in the myth of Bathsheba. A "vertuous maid"
learned housewifery as well as music. A "vertuous wife" was
so provident, so loyal that her husband trusted her to "keep
the keys of all." A "vertuous widow" turned her skills as a
deputy husband to the good of her family and learned to
govern as her husband once had. But Ornaments also enlarged
the intellectual and spiritual potential of women. Mather
insisted that though women might not speak in the church,
"yet our God has Emplcy'd many Women to write for the
church, and Inspir's some of them for the Writing of the

scriptures." Among those scriptures, of course, was Proverbs thirty-one, which Puritans attributed to Solomon's mother, the godly Bathsheba.[50]

In promoting an intellectual role for women, Mather was extending rather than challenging a prescribed religious role. Good Puritans had always been enjoined to read, to meditate, and to write. With the appropriate education, a very few women polished their piety in prose or verse.[51] That they were few in numbers hardly seems surprising. As John Woodbridge reminded readers of The Tenth Muse:

It is the Work of a Woman, honoured, and esteemed where she lives, for her gracious demeanor, her eminent parts, her pious conversation, her courteous disposition, her exact diligence in her place, and discreet managing of her Family occasions, and more then so, these Poems are the fruit but of some few hours, curtailed from her sleep and other refreshments.[52]

Like any other ornament of gentility, serious writing competed with industrious housekeeping.

The relationship between moral values and material culture is subtle, and it deserves further study. It is important to remember, however, that "pretty gentlewomen" might be every bit as religious as "good housewives," though their piety would turn on different issues. The Rule of Industry validated Esther Burr's obsessive housekeeping; the Rule of Modesty sustained Mary Gilman's zealous thrift; but the Rule of Charity allowed women like Mary Belcher or Lady

Pepperrell to enjoy their splendour in good conscience as they turned their beauty and their bounty toward uplifting the ministry. This support was both personal and material. Visible and earnest religious devotion was often the crowning ornament for a grand lady, a meekly bowed head setting off the dazzling beauty of her satin gown. Knowing that the general's lady approached the table of the Lord added dignity to common religious practice. Genteel allegiance bolstered the ministry; ministerial approbation ratified gentility.

This symbiotic bond is hinted at though seldom elaborated in the dozens of funeral sermons preached for affluent women by grateful pastors. In acknowledging Mary Belcher's charitable activities, Thomas Prince said that her heart was "soft and tender" toward the "afflicted and needy"--including ministers in distress.[53] A drunken shoemaker from Portsmouth put it more bluntly. The Reverend Mr. Moody had two special friends in the town, he said, Mr. Fryers wife, who "supplied him with Ribbin or trimmings for his cloaths," and William Seavy's wife, who "supplied him with coks and hens for to feed ungodly gutts." [54] Mary Pepperrell's devotion to the Kittery Point church and its pastor, John Newmarch, were well known. After Sir Williams death in 1759, she built an imposing mansion directly across the road from the meeting house, in that one act reinforcing

both the gentility which separated her from her neighbors and the piety which joined them. In the blaze of revolution, the Pepperrell holdings were confiscated as Tory property. Visible godliness as well as age may explain why Mary was allowed to remain in her house though her grandson, the second Sir William, was forced to flee.[55]

* * *

In August of 1732, Governor Belcher of Massachusetts wrote a letter to his son Jonathan, who was then studying law at the Middle Temple in London. The Governor's letter is a reminder of the importance of Bathsheba in the mythology of early New England, but it is also evidence that a scriptural model could mean quite different things to different people. In her husband's mind, the piety, industry, and gentility of Mary Belcher coalesced into one comfortable image. For him female roles were indistinguishable from all the other familiar forms and symbols which upheld the rule of merchants and the authority of fathers. Belcher had heard that his son wanted to marry. Hastening to show his displeasure, he detailed the pecuniary and other inconveniences which would result from so capricious an act, then closed his letter with a little essay on the nature of a good wife, whose qualities, he reminded Jonathan, were "elegantly described in the 31. chap. of Proverbs, which you wrote out in short hand in

your infant day. Pray, read it often, when you have a mind to be marry'd." [56]

The Governor did not leave his son's interpretation of scripture to chance. Not only did he urge Jonathan to make out a detailed list of expenses required in the first year of marriage, but he went on to list for his son the five qualities he considered absolutely essential in a wife. What his list lacked in grammatical precision, it made up in clarity. A suitable wife, he wrote, must possess "Strict Vertue" and "Good Nature." She must be "Agreeable (no matter whether beautifull)" and have "Passable good sense (no matter whether over-quick & sharp)." She must also bring "a Plentifull fortune." Lest Jonathan overlook the importance of the last named quality, his father elaborated and defended it. "A man will soon find himself miserable that makes money his first & principal choice," he wrote. "Yet the other four characters won't do without it. . . .if God please to spare your life, save your vertue, & bless your studies, I hope you will in due time lay 'em in the opposite scale to a lady of 10,000 sterling pounds, with all the other qualifications I have mention'd." Having made his message transparent, the Governor returned to religion in a postscript:

Lest you shou'd not take the pains to read the 31 chap. of Prov. my clerk had transcrib'd from the 10 ver. & it's inclosed.
He apparently found nothing ironic in the opening passage of

that scripture: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."

There is more at issue here than one man's ambivalence--or hypocrisy. The governor's peculiar mixture of materialism and religion was symptomatic of a larger conflict in New England. Entering a transatlantic scramble for profit and patronage, Belcher still clung to old securities, to New England cider and turnips on the table, to thrift and Bible reading, and to filial obedience and feminine piety.[57] For him, the "31 chap. of Prov." had none of the specific connotations that we have elaborated. He was not concerned about the religious convictions of Jonathan's future wife, even less so about her housekeeping skills--in his mind the "passable good sense" was sufficient. What he really feared was the disruptive power of sex. Youth, distance, and an attractive young woman might undermine both his fatherly authority and his fond hopes for Jonathan. As Governor Belcher (and King Solomon) knew, Bathsheba was simply an Eve transformed.

1. The Letters of Benjamin Franklin and Jane Mecom, ed. Carl van Doren, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 35.
2. Samples of this literature are quoted in G.E. & K.R. Russell, The English Countrywoman: A Farmhouse Social History (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1971), p. 107. For a modern echo of this stereotype, see Linda Grant De Pauw and Conover Hunt, Remember the Ladies: Women In America, 1750-1815, (New York: Viking Press, 1976), p. 126.
3. James Duncan Phillips, Salem In The Eighteenth Century, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1937), pp. 252-257.
4. The Holyoke Diaries, ed. George Francis Dow, (Salem: Essex Institute, 1911), pp. 48-81. These entries represent about a third of those referring to housekeeping in the period between January 1761 and January 1773. Mrs. Holyoke did not keep daily entries, just brief factual notes--items purchased, crops planted, visits made, visits received, journeys, and births, as they occurred. Her diary is a first for the region under study. No female diaries survive from before 1750.
5. Holyoke Diaries, p. 59; [Hannah Woolley], The Accomplish'd Lady's Delight in Preserving, Physick, Beautifying, and Cookery, (London, 1675), p. 253.
6. Inventory of Ursula Cutt, Portsmouth, 7 August 1694, New Hampshire Probate Records, Book , pp. 341-346. Karen Andresen kindly shared this document with me.
7. William B. Weedon, Economic and Social History fo New England, 1620-1789, vol. I, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin), 1891, pp. 226-229; Alice Morse Early, Costume of Colonial Times, (New York: Empire State Book, 1924), pp. 16-18.
8. Accomplish'd Lady's Delight, pp. 134, 155, 186, 201, 2, 324-325, 52. For Newbury peacocks, see Jonathan Belcher Letterbook, MS, Massachusetts Historical Society, IV, 3 March 1734/5. References to mushroom catsup can be

- found in Curwen Family Papers, MS, Essex Institute, III, Mary Russel to Samuel Curwen, 14 August 1751; conserved roses in "Diary of Reverend Joseph Green," EIHC, X (1869), 74; and "sweet bags" in Samuel Jacobs Inventory, Essex Probate, II, 282.
9. De Pauw, Remember the Ladies, p. 97; Susan Burrows Swan, Plain & Fancy: American Women and Their Needlework, 1700-1850, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), pp. 47-48, 52. For contemporary examples, see "Letter-Book of Samuel Sewall," Col. Mass. Hist. Soc., Sixth Series, I (1886) 44, and Diary of Cotton Mather, 1709-1724, Mass. Hist. Soc. Col., Seventh Series, VIII (Boston 1911), pp. 95, 112.
 10. Thomas Prince, Precious in the Sight of the Lord. . . A Sermon Upon the Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Oliver, (Boston: 1735) p. 23-24.; Joseph W.P. Frost, "Address delivered at the dedication of Lady Pepperrell House," TS, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston.
 11. Swan, Plain & Fancy, p. 56-57; Anne Farnham, "Textiles at the Essex Institute," EIHC, 110 (1974), figure 2, opposite 254; Glee Krueger, New England Samplers To 1840, (Sturbridge, Massachusetts: Old Sturbridge Village, 1978), pp. 1-3, and for a list of Boston needlework teachers, 1706-1760, pp. 156-159. Krueger lists no needlework teachers in Salem, Newbury, or Portsmouth before 1750. This may simply mean that none advertised in the newspapers which were her most important source of information.
 12. Reprinted in "Memoir of Rev. Nathaniel Rogers' Family," NEHGR, V, 144.
 13. Greenwood's painting is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
 14. Enoch Coffin Inventory, Essex County Probate Records, 5743.

15. Inventory of Pepperrell Books, Lady Pepperrell House, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Kittery Point, Maine. The Female Spectator, Vol. II, Third Edition, (London 1750) has the number "129" and Andrew Pepperrell's signature. An essay in Book 10 of this volume applauds efforts to educate women beyond the domestic duties so that they might be better companions to their husbands, pp. 195 ff. The reference to Heywood's novel is in Holyoke Family Papers, MS, Essex Institute, Edward Augustus Holyoke to Margaret Holyoke, 8 April 1747, Box 6, Folder 1.

16. Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744, ed. Carl Bridenbaugh, (Chapel Hill: 1948), p. 112.

17. quoted in Clifford K. Shipton, New England Life In The Eighteenth Century, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 185.

18. Although I have not explored this question systematically, the handwriting of women seems to bear this out. The few seventeenth-century letters written by women are almost always in block-letters, like a young person's printing. In the middle of the eighteenth-century, it is difficult to identify "female" handwriting in the same way. Cotton Mather showed a great deal of interest in developing his daughter's penmanship, Mather, Diary, pp. 43, 84, 276.

19. For typical references to meals and menus, see Diaries of Benjamin Lynde and of Benjamin Lynde, Jr., (Boston: 1880), pp. 40, 116, 131, 133. Governor Jonathan Belcher reassured his mother-in-law, Mary Partridge of Newbury, that her "entertainment" was "good & handsome. . . as I alwayes find with you, nor do I ever desire better." Jonathan Belcher Letter Book, IV, 1 April 1732, MS, Massachusetts Historical Society.

20. Pepperrell Papers, Mass. Hist. Soc. Col., Series 6, X, 368.

21. This story passed down in local tradition into the nineteenth-century is quoted in Charles E. Clark, The Eastern Frontier: The Settlement of Northern New

- England, 1610-1763, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 176.
22. W.G. Wendell, The Warner House, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1966), pp. 7-9.
 23. The Works of Anne Bradstreet, ed. John Howard Ellis, (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1962, 1867), pp. 41-42.
 24. The Saltonstall Papers, 1607-1814, Robert E. Moody, ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1972), I, 176.
 25. Saltonstall Papers, I, 189-190.
 26. Saltonstall Papers, I, 218-221, 224, 235.
 27. Saltonstall Papers, I, 242.
 28. Saltonstall Papers, I, 228. On Nathaniel Saltonstall's conviviality and apparent fondness for drink, see Diary of Samuel Sewall, ed. M. Halsey Thomas, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 1973), I, 374; Saltonstall Papers, I, 211-212.
 29. "Diary of Rev. Joseph Green," EIHC, VIII, (1866), 218-221; Sibley's Harvard Graduates, IV, pp. 228-231.
 30. "Joseph Green His Beck," Pub. Col. Soc. Mass., XXIV (1943), 252; "Diary of Rev. Joseph Green," EIHC, X (1869), 79.
 31. Edgar J. McManus, Flack Bondage in the North, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973), pp. 199-200.; Diaries of Rev. Timothy Walker, ed. Joseph B. Walker, (Concord, N.H., 1889) p. 21.
 32. Mary Ann La Fleur Dagenias, "The Black In Portsmouth, New Hampshire 1700-1861," MA Thesis, University of New Hampshire, 1970, p. 17.

34. Garvin, "Portsmouth and the Piscataqua," p. 10; Maine Catalog, Historic American Building Survey, (Maine State Museum, 1974), pp. 17-18; Joseph W.P. Frost, Sir William Pepperrell, (New York: Newcomen Society, 1951) pp. 25-26.
35. The Belknap Papers, Col. Mass. Hist. Soc., Sixth Series, IV, 228-229. The editor thinks Mr. Belknap may have written the poem, though he himself attributed it to "Ruthy" in a letter to a friend.
36. Laurie Crumpacker, "'My Time Is Not My Own But God's': Religion and Daily Work in the Journal of Esther Burr, 1754-1758," paper delivered at Old Sturbridge Village Spring Weekend, March 1977, pp. 5, 8-11.
37. Philip Greven, The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Childrearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).
38. Holyoke Papers, Box I, Folder 2, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.
39. Mrs. Charles P. Noyes, ed., A Family History In Letters And Documents, 1667-1837, (St. Paul, Minnesota: 1919) pp. 55-60.
40. Family History, p. 66, 65.
41. Family Papers, 54; Corstance Le Neve Gilman Ames, The Story of the Gilmans, (Yakima, Washington, 1950) p. 73.
42. Holyoke Diaries, e.g. pp. 3, 15, 21-22; The Diary of Nicholas Gilman, ed. William Kidder, unpublished MA thesis, University of New Hampshire, 1967, e.g. pp. 153, 203, 134. The Gilman diary is the best account of the awakening in Durham and neighboring towns.
43. Book of the Church of Newbury Mass. 1635-1828, MS, Old Newbury Historical Society, Newbury, Mass., May 1752.

44. The Simple Cobbler of Aggawamm in America, (London: 1647), pp. 25-31.
45. The reference is in the diary of Joseph Moody of York, Maine, now being edited by Ray Wilbur.
46. Hoop-Fetticoats Arraigned, (Boston, 1722), p. 7.
47. At a "spinning bee" held at the minister's house in Falmouth at the end of the war, 236 skeins of yarn were turned out on sixty wheels. Rolla Milton Tryon, Household Manufacturers in the United States, (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1917), pp. 124ff.
48. Anne Bradstreet, Several Poems, (Boston, 1678), p. 4.
49. Bradstreet, Several Poems, pp. iii-xiv.
50. Cotton Mather, Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion, (Cambridge: 1692), pp. 2, 73-74, 81-83, 100-101, 5, 7-8.
51. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," American Quarterly, XXVII (Spring 1976), pp. 25-26, 32-35.
52. Bradstreet, Several Poems, pp. iii-iv.
53. Thomas Prince, Christ Abolishing Death, (Boston: 1736), p. 39.
54. New Hampshire Court Papers, I:1, p. 157.
55. Frost, Pepperrell, p. 30.
56. Belcher Papers, Col. Mass. Hist. Soc., VI, 168-171.

57. On Belcher's preference for turnips ("I eat no other root") and cider, see Belcher Letter Book, II, October 25, 1731; on concern about childrearing and conflict with sons over marriage, II, June 20, 1732 (To the Bishop of Lincoln), and VI, Feb. 15, 1739/40 (To Rev. Joseph Sewall).

Part Two

Eve

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2: 18, 21-25

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...

And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

Genesis 3: 12-17, 20

Chapter Five

The Serpent Beguiled Me

It might have been a restoration comedy-[1] In the spring of 1663 John Rolfe, a Newbury fisherman, went off to Nantucket, leaving behind a comely and "merily disposed" young wife named Mary. Being "a verie loving husband," Rolfe arranged for Mary to "live Cherfully as he thought and want for nothing" in his absence. He asked Betty Webster, a single woman in the neighborhood to stay with Mary until he returned. Betty's stepfather, Goodman John Emery, who was a town selectman, promised to be as father to both young women. But Rolfe's careful arrangements proved a snare. No sooner had he sailed out of Newbury harbor when two strangers from old England sailed in. Henry Greenland and John Cordin, physicians and gentlemen, came to lodge at the Emery house.

Mary confided to Betty Webster that "Mr Cording was as pretty a Carriadg man as Ever shee saw in hir life." But Greenland proved more interesting still. He was uninhibited by the pious manners of the Newbury folk. At supper, before Goodman Emery could half finish prayer, "Mr grenland put on his hatt and spread his napkin and stored the sampe and said Com Landlord light supper short grace." Mary was both

enticed and troubled by his attentions. When he pulled her toward him by her apron strings, she resisted at first, only giving way, as she said, "to save my apron." One minute she rebuked him for acting "an uncivell part." The next she was laughing and eating samp with him out of one dish and with one spoon.

Late one night, Mary was in bed with Betty feeding her baby when Henry Greenland knocked on the window. Frightened, she made no answer. "Fettye, Bettye," Greenland called. "Will you let me stand here and starve with the cold." Betty answered that they were already in bed, that they would not let him in, that they were afraid of him. He continued to plead, protesting that he "would doe them noe hirt, but desired to smoke a pipe of tabacco." Betty let him in. Still in bed, Mary told her to rake up the fire to give Mr. Greenland some light. While Betty bent over the hearth with her back to the room, Greenland pulled off his clothes and climbed into bed. Just as Betty turned around, Mary fainted.

"Sir," cried Betty, "what have you done? You have put the women into a fitt."

"The Devell has such fitts," said Greenland, scrambling out of bed. "It is nothing but a mad fitt."

Suddenly Mary was conscious. "What offence have I have given that you should speke such words," she exclaimed. Greenland jumped back into bed.

"Lord help me," she shrilled. At that moment, Henry Lessenby, a neighbor's servant, just happened to walk by. He had earlier observed Greenland's attentions to Goody Rolfe. Hearing the cry, he ran to the Rolfe door and knocked loudly. "Lye still," whispered Greenland, "for now there are two witnesses, we shall be tried for our lives." But Lessenby was not to be discouraged by silence. He climbed through the window, stumbled into the room in the dark, and felt his way to the bedside. In the dim light from the fireplace, he discerned a gentleman's clothes on a box by the bed. Reaching for the pillow, he felt a beard. Just as he suspected, it was Greenland.

Lessenby might have raised a commotion, but he chose instead to act the part of the stage servant who, loving a secret, is drawn through vanity or cupidity into the intrigues of his betters. As he later reported it, "The woman and I went adore to Consider what was best to be done so we thought becas he was a stranger and a great man it was not best to make an up Rore but to let him go way in a private maner."

Here the plot calls for deeper entanglements, for pacts between the gentleman and the maid, half-kept promises whispered on the doorstep in the dark, and finally the return of the cuckolded husband. But this little drama was not enacted on the London stage but in a Massachusetts village. In this case the young wife was rescued by an old wife, the husband was avenged, and the denouement was played in the county court. Goody Rolfe had a pious mother and an observant sister. At meeting on Sunday, Sarah Bishop saw that her sister Mary looked "sadd & mellencholly her eyes swoln with crying."

"What is the matter," she asked. Mary wept. "I am so troubled & haunted with Greenland I cannot tell what to do." Sarah alerted her mother, who resolved to visit the Rolfe house the next morning. Her fears were confirmed when coming near the house she observed a boy rushing out with a glass--to get liquor for Doctor Greenland, he said. Goody Bishop sat for two hours in her daughter's home, watching and observing and waiting for an opportunity to speak. Finally Greenland left.

"What is the Reason this man came hither?" she asked.

"I know not," answered Mary, who seemed to fear telling her mother all that had happened between them. She finally confessed that Greenland had "with many Arguments inticed her to the act of uncleanness," but reassured her that "god

had hitherto helped her resist him & hoped still hee would."

"Will you venture to lay under these temptations & concealed wickedness," cried her mother. "You may Provoak God to Leave you & then you will come under Great Blame."

"I know not what to doe," she sighed. "Hee is in Creditt in the Towne, some take him to be godly & say hee hath grace in his face, he have an honest loke, he have such a carrige that he deceive many: It is saide the Governer sent him a letter Counting it a mercy such an Instrument was in the Country, and what shall such a pore young woman as I doe in such a case, my husband being not at home." As if to comfort her mother, Mary added, "Betty & I have promised to bee faithfull to each other & to help one another."

Goody Bishop was troubled. "These things are not to bee kept private," she said. "Goodman Emery heeing grand Jury-man must present them." When confronted, however, Goodman Emery proved unwilling to act the part of moral guardian. (Had he seen too much "merriness" on Mary's part?) He promised to keep closer watch on Greenland, to lock up the hard drink, and to see that the Doctor stayed home when half-drunk, but he felt matters were best kept quiet for the moment. He could see no harm done.

Goody Bishop was not to be soothed by promises. On her way home she encountered Goody Emery and explained to her all that had happened. The wife proved more sympathetic

than the husband. Together the two women returned to the Rolfe house, pressed Mary and Betty further, and concluded that Greenland's actions had been "more gross" than they had first believed. When she understood the situation, Goody Emery "seemed to bee much troubled, & wished hee had never come to her house."

"I dare not keep such things as these private upon my owne head," said Goody Bishop as the two women parted.

"Doe wisely." answered her friend.

That night, having asked for God's direction, Goody Bishop revealed all that she knew to a "wise man" in the town, asking for his advice. He directed her to the magistrates. Henry Greenland was tried by jury at his own request, perhaps counting on his good reputation in the town, but was convicted of attempted adultery and fined the whopping sum of thirty pounds. The citizens of Newbury supported the pious mother against the dazzling stranger. John Rolfe returned from Nantucket avenged.

Greenland's conviction did not bring down the curtain on the case, however. In the weeks that followed, the original action spilled over into a number of suits and countersuits as feelings among the principal parties surfaced. Mary Rolfe was fined and bound to good behavior, not just for her dalliance with Greenland but for implicating John Emery in the case by suggesting that he

aided and abetted his lodger. John Emery found himself in court when a number of townsmen brought an action against him for entertaining strangers in violation of town restrictions. Henry Lessenby was presented for pulling down a board and going into Goodwife Rolfe's window. Betty Webster, at odds with her parents for seeming to support Mary's side of the story against them, was chastened for giving a false oath. But at last the case ran its course. After a half-hearted appeal, Greenland paid his fine. Emery's neighbors withdrew their suit. The court denied Emery's own slander case against John Rolfe and at the same time refused to give Rolfe a judgment against Emery.[2] The village returned to daily business, and Mary Rolfe became once more a modest and home-loving wife.

The Greenland-Rolfe case vividly portrays the cultural assumptions which governed sexual behavior in early New England. Beyond that, it takes us to the center of key issues in the history of the western family. The evidence is all the more convincing since it emanates, not from the pens of dramatists or moralists, but from the actual events in an obscure village. In their own testimony and in the testimony of their neighbors, the outraged mother, the libertine stranger, and the befuddled wife emerge with almost mythical clarity. To understand this village morality play, we must determine the historical meaning of

the characters. That they do not represent the classical stage triangle--husband, wife, and lover--is in itself significant. What can we make of a plot which casts a mother as moral guardian, a dashing Englishman as assailant, and a pretty young bride as victim?

One obvious interpretation would make Puritanism the real protagonist.[3] Surely Goody Bishop represents the community surveillance characteristic of the rule of the Saints. As Mary Rolfe's mother she upheld a morality thundered from the pulpit and enforced by the court. As for Henry Greenland, the libertine Englishman, he was a Thomas Morton (or Tom Jones) caught in a society he did not understand, incriminated as much by his attitude as his acts. How many of his reported boasts--that it didn't matter that he had a wife in England, that Mary need not worry about consequences, that he could afford two wives--were in jest? He insisted that he meant no harm, but in Newbury his carefree words condemned him. In this view, Mary Rolfe hardly matters. The real conflict was between two cultures--Puritan Massachusetts and Merry England.

Yet a close examination of the case suggests that the most serious division was not between the town and the stranger but within the community itself--and perhaps in the mind of Mary Rolfe. Dragged into court by the neighbors, John Emery angrily reported that before the fateful night

someone had put "fig dust" (tobacco shavings) and pebbles in Greenland's bed. Had Mary Rolfe surreptitiously invited the pretty gentleman to rap on her window and ask for a light? Had Betty Webster or someone else in Emery's family been playing tricks on them both?[4]

The drama of Mary Rolfe--like the larger history which it represents--can be analyzed at several levels. At the most basic it is a seduction scene. All the elements are there: the little games, the knowing laughter, the halfsent signals, the ritual resistance, the leap into bed, and--on both sides--the psychic risks, fear of misunderstanding, of rejection, and of betrayal. Sex is a good source of comedy, on and off the stage, because it is such a prime source of anxiety. The underlying human drama is timeless--but it is always set in a particular time and place. As Phillip Aries has said, "the attitude to sex, and doubtless sex itself, varies according to environment, and consequently according to period and mentality."[5]

Since the 1930's discussion of sexual behavior in New England has centered on the issue of repression (an emphasis which says as much about twentieth-century anxieties as about the assumptions of the past.) Despite the efforts of Edmund S. Morgan to dispell the stereotype of the "sad and sour" saints, historians continue to ask, "How 'Puritan' were the Puritans?"[6] Michael Zuckerman insists they were

hostile to the flesh.[7] Philip Greven says that some of them were.[8] For our purposes, the question is badly put. The dynamics of cultural change are more understandable if we examine sexual behavior in New England as less an ideological than a community and a gender issue. To see Goody Bishop as simply an instrument of Puritan repression is to obscure the chief significance of her behavior. She was acting out a traditional female role which Puritanism had reinforced but by no means created. Laurence Stone's assertion that "changing rules about sexual behavior have nearly always been made by men" has validity only on the most formal level.[9] Men have certainly written the statutes, the treatises, and the sermons which have in part defined acceptable conduct, but women have obviously been primary participants in the complex politics of sex.

To understand the historical drama in Newbury one must take the characters pretty much at their surface value. Goody Bishop was an old woman. Mary Rolfe was a young woman. Henry Greenland was an aggressive male. The key question is not the nature of religion but the perceived nature of female sexuality in a particular time and place. The really crucial issues are exposed in the action itself with all its confusion and apparent inconsistency. Mary Rolfe was obviously attracted to Greenland. She was also afraid of him. She openly flirted with him. At the same

time, she was troubled by her own feelings and by the potential consequences of her behavior. Her dilemma was created by the coexistence in one rural village of an hierarchal social order, a pervasive religious tradition, and patterns of feminine sociability deeply rooted in English folkways. All three elements determined her behavior. Accustomed to deference--to her mother, to her husband, to the selectman next door--she was easily dazzled by the genteel appearance and apparent good name of Greenland. What right had she to question his behavior? Though taught to fear God, she had not yet acquired the kind of confidence in her own sense of right which propelled her mother to challenge both a popular gentleman and a respected town official by bringing the case to court. Finally, in her easy compliance with Greenland's initial advances, Mary Rolfe was responding to a lifetime of instruction in femininity. Puritan girls, like ordinary Englishwomen of any persuasion, knew how to light pipes for strangers.

In the western world, the sexual misbehavior of women has usually been considered of greater consequence than that of men. Keith Thomas has argued that this "double standard" is but one manifestation of an hierarchal system which included not just the subordination of one class to another but the subordination of female to male. Thus, from medieval times "the absolute property of the women's

chastity was vested not in the woman herself, but in her parents or her husband." [10] Since New England was part of the west, it is hardly surprising to find aspects of this double standard embedded in law. Despite Puritan teaching, which insisted upon strict fidelity from both partners, the legal code even in Massachusetts defined adultery as sexual intercourse with a married woman. A married man who engaged in physical relations with a single woman was guilty only of fornication. [11] From this point of view, Henry Greenland's pursuit of Mary Rolfe was not just an attempted seduction, it was a trespass upon the "property rights" of John Rolfe, who in fact successfully sued Greenland for damages soon after his return from sea. (There was no question, of course, of Mistress Greenland suing anyone, even though she too arrived in New England not long after the case came to court.) [12]

Throughout the Christian world, the property concept of chastity was challenged by a religious concept which upheld the value of premarital purity and marital fidelity for both sexes. Despite inconsistencies, New England law went further than English law in recognizing these values. In some respects, the Massachusetts adultery law was an anomaly, dependent less on an European "double standard" than on Biblical precedent. Because adultery was such a heinous crime in the Bay Colony (punishable by death),

convictions were rare.[13] Married folk of either sex were usually punished for the lesser crimes of "attempted adultery," "uncleanness," or "lascivious carriage." In prosecuting fornicators, Massachusetts courts moved closer to a single standard. Since women carried the most convincing evidence of fornication, they were easier to find and convict than men, but the courts sought out unmarried fathers as earnestly as mothers and often found them. Men had good reason to flee. A woman's accusation, especially if witnessed by the midwives at the time of delivery, was sufficient to convict a man, all his protests notwithstanding.[14]

The rigorous enforcement of the moral law in New England was certainly linked to Puritanism, though not necessarily to the brooding guilt and prudery which have been associated with it.[15] New Englanders punished extramarital sexuality because they valued marriage not because they denied the flesh. Consider Nathaniel Saltonstall of Haverhill, for example. As a magistrate he sentenced fornicators and adulterers with all soberness, but in a chatty letter to his son he could joke about the newly married minister and his wife who slept in an upstairs chamber in the family garrison, "and for ought I see, love one another, for they are not up so soon as the Sun." [16] Anne Bradstreet of Andover openly celebrated physical love

in poems written to her husband and published by her children after her death.[17] In the same period and in the same small towns, anonymous carvers created gravestone imagery which was clearly (though probably unselfconsciously) erotic.[18] For every example of a grim-faced ascetic in early New England there is a Nathaniel Saltonstall or an Anne Bradstreet.

We must be very careful, however, about defining sexuality either through the harsh lens of the law or the rosy glass of the poet. Both developed from the same ethos. For many New Englanders sex was neither a polluting nor a lyrical experience. It was simply an insistent, sometimes pleasurable, but often troublesome part of life. This was particularly true of women, for whom sexuality was inextricably linked with reproduction and mothering. To examine New England folkways is to discover a world strikingly different from statute or sermon.

Even if the notion had suggested itself, there was little possibility of separating sexual experience from the daily round of life in New England. Procreation was everywhere, in the barnyard as well as in the house. Since sleeping quarters were crowded and darkness provided the only privacy, most children gained their first awareness of copulation from half-muffled sounds and shapes in the night. When Abigail Willey of Oyster River wanted to prevent her

husband from "coming to her," she planted her two youngest children in the middle of the bed between them. Entertaining a lover, she simply shoved the children to one side, telling them to lie still or else she would "kick them out." The night John Bickford slept with her mother, seven-year-old Judith Willey told a New Hampshire court, the bed "craked" so she could not sleep.[19] Abigail Willey's extramarital affair was deviant, but the context in which it occurred was not. Many poor children shared a bed with their parents. Those who left testimony in court simply had a chance to witness what others also knew.

Sharing rooms, beds, benches, trenchers, and even spoons, ordinary New Englanders had little opportunity to develop the elaborate sense of personal space so essential to "polite" interaction. Chairs were rare. Bedrooms hardly existed. Although in some families the parents' bedstead was curtained for warmth or privacy, it almost always occupied "public" space.[20] In most dwellings, as in Mary Rolfe's, the front door opened on a bed, an arrangement which could sometimes result in trouble. When Sarah Linsey woke one night and felt someone beside her, she thought her husband had come home from a journey unexpectedly. But when she saw a hat with ribbons on it atop a heap of clothes on the floor, she knew it was not his. She ran upstairs to find her brother, who came down and wakened the befuddled

stranger. "I thought I had been in my owne house and in my own bed," he said, insisting he was not "in drink." "The more shame for you," Sarah answered.[21]

There were proprieties, of course. A respectable woman did not undress before her male servants nor did she lie under the covers with a man not her husband, but she might sleep in the same room with either.[22] She did not sing and drink with strangers in the tavern, though out of common hospitality she would certainly smoke at her own hearth or doorstep with any of her husband's friends.[23] She did not sit on her neighbor's lap or kiss him in the barn, but with good conscience she could share his horse.[24] Lynn folks were shocked when Goody Leonard stood laughing at the mill pond where a group of servants were skinny-dipping, forcing the "more modest" of the men to put on their shirts in the water, letting them drop "by degrees" as they came out.[25] But relatives at Ipswich as well as friends at the Isles of Shoals were just as surprised at the jealousy of William Row, who became angry if any man "saluted" his wife with a kiss, a custom which was apparently as acceptable in New England as in old.[26] Even in Puritan towns, New Englanders were more Elizabethan than Victorian.

Such behavior is easily misinterpreted, however. Twentieth-century readers, enjoying the "earthiness" of seventeenth-century court records may mistake verbal

openness for an easy and matter-of-fact attitude to the flesh. The opposite is often closer to the truth. In pre-modern societies sexual tensions are close to the surface and are frequently vented in bawdy stories or in epithets hurled across a fence in anger. To impute a person's sexual integrity was a particularly potent form of slander in early New England, suggesting that the values enshrined in formal law were widely acknowledged but tenuously held. A large number of New Englanders could not trust themselves--or their neighbors.

How else can one explain the presentation in York County Court of Goody Mendum of Kittery whose crime consisted of calling Mistress Alice Shapleigh "a pedlers Trull"? In a less close-knit society, a wild accusation flung at the wife of a town official would hardly deserve the dignity of attention. In seventeenth-century Kittery it called for a forced retraction, not only in court but in church.[27] Because this was a society which still depended primarily upon external rather than internal controls, many New Englanders responded not so much to guilt as to shame. The opinion of one's neighbor was everything.

Village verdicts were sometimes more harsh than the law. Even though her first marriage had been annulled by the General Court and she had a clear right to remarry, an Essex County woman named Goody Beale was still subject to

slander. In 1670, two men attacked her house, brandishing clubs, and yelling to her second husband, "Come out you cuckoldy curr: we are come to beat thee: though livest in adultery." Earlier, in the midst of a squabble, a female neighbor had called Goody Beale a "jade" and an "adulteress." [28] Hints of scandal could survive for decades. Half a century after his parents had appeared in York County Court to answer a charge of fornication, Major Joseph Hammond of Mittery sued Captain John Heard, who in an argument had called him the "son of a Whore" and said he could prove it. [29]

Whore. Jade. Adulteress. Strumpet. Trull. Such words came quickly to the tongues of village gossips. They meant everything and nothing. Most country towns had their loose women, though there were no professional prostitutes in the modern sense. Villagers were contentious, suspicious, and at one level unforgiving, but by modern standards they showed an astonishing ability to accept deviation, even of the most disruptive kind. [30] They punished, but did not ostracize, their Hester Prynnes. Most women--even those with illegitimate children--eventually married. [31]

This curious mixture of severity and tolerance is partially explained in religious terms. The old proverb, "there but for the Grace of God go I," was accepted

literally by Calvinists. Since the potential for evil was innate, one could not protect the community by walling off a few sinners. Not that Puritans believed all human effort futile. Responsible Christians must do their best to prevent temptation from disrupting the social order, but God ultimately determined the outcome.[32] Don't keep Greenland's propositions a secret, Goody Bishop warned her daughter, or "you may provoak God to Leave you." [33]

For many New Englanders, however, religion was but a thin overlay on a traditional fatalism, a passive and uncritical acceptance of what life brought. On the positive side this might mean carefree tumbling in the hay, a robust embrace of physical experience in all its variety. On the negative side it could mean profound pessimism, an inability to see oneself as in any sense a shaper of events. Such an attitude affected both sexes, of course, but in the traditional world fatalism and femininity were powerfully linked.[34]

The serpent bequiled me, and I did eat. New England ministers did not berate women for the sin of Eve. In fact, in referring to the transgression in Eden they almost always spoke of the "sin of Adam," perhaps unconsciously assuming male pre-eminence even in evil but at least sometimes intentionally countering the ancient misogyny.[35] Eve's sin was in one sense hardly a sin at all. Her transgression

was an inevitable consequence of her nature--weak, unstable, susceptible to suggestion. She was "beguiled." [36]

There was no question of one sex being more or less sinful than another. Outside of family and community government, males were carnal, sensual, and devilish. Puritan writers were amazed at the sexual restraint of Indian men, who never raped their captives. They could only attribute this amazing preservation of New England women to divine intervention. [37] No, both sexes were culpable. But they were different. Men required restraint, especially when drunk. Women needed protection, not because they were innocent but because they were not. They were physically and sexually vulnerable. There were no "fallen women" in seventeenth-century New England because there were no untouchable ones. Medical opinion regarding female orgasm was exactly opposite what it would become in the nineteenth century. Clitoral erection was deemed essential for conception; folklore even assumed an emission of seed. [38] Once awakened, women were considered especially susceptible to temptation, which explained why young widows were such frequent transgressors. Their humble confessions in court and church reinforced folk wisdom: "He who wooeth a widow must go stiff before." [39]

As might be expected, the vocabulary describing the sexual misbehavior of women was richer and more direct than that for men. Even the epithets "cuckold" and "pimp" turn on female rather than on male promiscuity. The opposite of "whore" was "rogue," a term which mixed sexual and more general meanings-[40] For a woman, sexual reputation was everything; for a man it was part of a larger pattern of responsibility. A "whore" bestowed her favors indiscriminately, denying any man exclusive right to her body. A "rogue" tricked or forced a woman into submission with no regard for consequences. The words mirror traditional gender relationships. A woman gave; a man took. Because the female role was in its nature more ambiguous, less clearly active without quite being passive, a woman could lose her reputation simply in being attacked. "Whore! baud!" Patrick Morrin shouted at Mary Water when she ran from the house after an attempted assault.[41]

So Mary Rolfe smiled when Henry Greenland pulled on her apron strings. She ate out of his dish and laughed at his jokes, and perhaps enjoyed the game of conquest and resistance. When the plot grew more serious, she found herself confused. To call for help would be an admission of complicity. Who would believe her story against a man in credit in the town, especially when everyone knew she was young, pretty, and "often merrily disposed"? Her only

recourse was to petition the court and confess herself "a poor young woman and in an afflicted Condition." The same vulnerability which led to her trouble might save her from it.

If the role of Mary Holfe was clear, so was that of Goody Bishop. She had earned her position through experience. In New England, ultimate authority to police sexual behavior was given to men--to justices, juries, ministers, and elders. In reality, primary responsibility for controlling female sexuality was in the hands of women. The formal role of midwives in fornication cases grew out of a larger and more pervasive system of informal justice. Just as Goody Bishop instinctively turned to Goody Emery in determining her course in response to Henry Greenland, so older women throughout New England acted as advisers, counselors, and ultimately as judges, though sometimes their visible role was intentionally muted. In September of 1664, Elizabeth Perkins, Sr. and Agnes Ewens of Topsfield sent word to the Essex County court that "they did not desire to testify but would depose if called." They explained that

what had brought them forth was the busy prattling of some other, probably the one whom they had taken along with them to advise a young woman, whose simple and foolish carriages and words, having heard of, they desired to advise better... They desired to be excused from testifying because what was told them was a private confession which they had never to that day divulged, and the woman had never offended since that time but had lived gravely and soberly.[42]

The two women assumed a kind of "professional immunity" in this case from the inquisitions of the county officials. Their consciousness of their own importance is striking, but the role they had played was not unusual.

An hierarchal social structure which made women subject to men, a religious tradition which demanded morality from both sexes, and patterns of feminine behavior rooted in traditional fatalism--against this backdrop men and women in northern New England played out an old drama of conquest and seduction.

Gorgeana, Province of Maine, 1650. For more than a year Jane Bond had been troubled with "fat Robert," who came to her house on at least four occasions when her husband was away "to the East." The first time he "strived with her but hardly knew hur boddy fully." Six months later he came again. When he tried to crawl through the window, she opened the door and let him in. "Robert Collins leave my company and medell not with me," she told him. "If not I will make you a shame to all New England." But though she tried, she "could not save hir selfe." Whether this had anything to do with alcohcl is not clear, but when he came the third time at twilight and sat on her doorstep, she would not open the door. "I would have given you some drinke," he said. She answered, "I know not what is in it." About midnight on a May evening as she was making a cake to

leave with her children, who would be alone the next day, Collins again came to the door, this time pushing the door almost off the hinges. He asked her to move her youngest child out of the bed and lie with him. She refused. He forced her.

"Put your finger but a littell in the fier you will not be able to Induer it," she told him, "but I must suffer eternally." Then she added, "You burn in your lust."

The next day, Jane went to her neighbor, Mary Tappe. Her heart was heavy, she was troubled to be so much alone, she said, and she was afraid to live so. Some one had been at her house the night before.

"It might be cattle," the neighbor answered.

"Noe," Jane said, "it was not cattell." Who then had been there? Jane simply repeated over and over again, "Alase I am but one, I dare not reveale it."

"Why did you not cry out," Mary asked.

"Alase," she answered. "I may Cry tell my hart ake." [43]

Salem, Essex County, 1672. Elizabeth Godell was careful to tell the justice of the peace that "the language John Smith used to me and the Actions were such as most tend to the way of his calling in dealing with Cattell and not so like unlawful dalliances tending to uncleanness." No

attempted rape--just continual and persistent annoyance. The record is never more specific, but the unbrotherly kisses, the meaningful looks, and the well-placed pats are easy to picture. These "assaults" and "affronts" had been going on for years, ever since her son Zachary was a little boy. Smith approached Elizabeth at her sister's house when he was there digging a well, at Giles Corey's house while Goody Corey was bringing in the linen from the bushes, and once at her own house on the Lord's day while her husband was at meeting. He became so insistent as they rode together to his wife's lying-in that she was forced to jump from the horse. Working in a swamp near her dwelling, he called for fire. When she refused to stay and smoke with him, he chased her up a hill.

Why didn't she complain? A male neighbor testified that he had come into the room after one alleged assault. If there was really a problem, she should have said something then. All he could see was "laughing and smoking."

Female neighbors said that Elizabeth was afraid. She told them that Smith was "an ugly rogue" and she was frightened if she told he would kill her or her children or "hurt her creatures." Even if he were tried and convicted, she explained, "what a sad life should I have with my Husbands realtions." [44]

Kittery, York County, 1710. When John White, the tinker, came to Mary Jenkin's house asking to borrow a conoe, she was glad to see him. Her husband Rowland was frequently at sea and she was afraid of Indians, who had taken captives in her own neighborhood. She told White if he would stay the night, she would go with him to Mr. Kelley's house in town to get the canoe. He stayed. She sent to a neighbor's hose for a pipe and tobacco, and the two of them sat up most of the night talking and smoking, "on two chairs," she said. Near morning, he threw her on the bed and said he would "have his will of her," keeping his face so close to hers, she could not scream. "I was in Souch a fit," she told the court, "that I do not know all hee dead or how Long hee Stayed."

About daylight Mary's mother knocked on the door. White answered. "Your Daughter would not Lett me come away," he explained; "She was afraid of the Indians."

Goody Muggeridge worried. Mary had given birth to an illegitimate child before she married Jenkins as his third wife. She urged her daughter not to tell her husband of White's visit. Knowing he "did not allow of any man to Be att their house affter it was Night," she was afraid he would "Go Neare to Kill her." Mary decided upon half-truth. When Jenkins returned, she told him that "the Tinker Lay att there house the Night before," but that Goody Pope also lay

there, that White had refused the women's offer to give up the bed, that he had slept on chairs, and that he was "an honest and civil man." At a neighbor's house next day, Jenkins casually engaged Sarah Pope in conversation and found she had not slept with his wife. When Goody Muggeridge came to the house later, she found her daughter sitting under a tree. She refused to go inside, saying "she wished her selfe Dead her husband had soe Kikt her and hurt her." [45]

Despite differences in circumstances, in place and in time, the three stories illustrate common themes. In each case, a woman advertently or inadvertently encouraged her aggressor. In each case, she found herself unable to complain. Her fears were complex. There was the danger of beating but also the larger threat of disrupting the heirarchy of relations in which she found herself. Behind that was a deep sense of complicity in the crime.

The stories are grim in the telling, but they do not end here. When Jane Bond broke her silence she found she was not alone. The record does not explain exactly how Robert Collins came to trial, but events seem to have begun with that first tentative confession to Mary Tapp. Quizzed by another neighbor, six-year-old Henry Bond revealed that "fat Robert" was the man who had been with his mother.

Henry Norton, who lived in the house next door, remembered hearing a strange sound in the night. Robert Knight thought that he had heard one too. Goody Knight was sure she had seen someone go by the house early in the morning; she thought it was Robert Collins. Pleading "not guilty," Collins was tried by jury, acquitted of the "forcement," which might have brought death, but sentenced to the extremely harsh punishment of "forty stripes but one," the maximum corporal punishment ever administered in New England. In addition he was fined ten pounds, half to go "to the cuntrey," half to Nicholas Bond.[47]

The role of neighborhood women is even more prominent in the case of Elizabeth Goodell. Bit by bit, she too began to talk--to her sister, to her husband, and to trusted friends. Their advice was mixed. Some suggested a private hearing, some a formal complaint. Elizabeth went "down to towne to acquaint Major Hathorne with it but was discouraged by others and being foolish & not acquainted with the Law, did forbear." While she hesitated, the scandal quickly and inexorably "spread abroad." Within a few weeks, the magistrates were summoning her. Thus, without filing a formal complaint and probably without meaning to do so, she had brought John Smith to court. She told the magistrates she was sorry about the gossip. She repented of speaking "foolishly vainly or slitley of such matters" and

acknowledged it "a dishonor to the Sect of women," but she could not "wrong the truth." She hoped her brother-in-law would not "suffer more than he hath deserved." The court sentenced him to be whipped on the next lecture day-[47]

The outcome of the third case was quite different. Although Mary Jenkins finally convinced her husband that John White had forced her, she could not convince the court. Her first mistake seems to have been in violating the trust of the female community by lying about the the presence of Sarah Pope on the fateful night. When the story became known, Mary Rice and Sarah Keene went to Mary and pressed her for details. They later reported the entire conversation to the magistrates. In examination, Goody Keene had been as relentless as any state prosecutor. She focused upon the "fit" which Mary had described in her complaint. "Were you sencable when the Tinker was in the vary act?" she asked.

"No," Mary replied. But she insisted that "By what he said and the Circumstances affter ward" she knew that he raped her.

Keene admonished her for attempting to take away a man's life without better proof than her thoughts. "Did hee ly with you after you where in your fitte?"

Mary said "No."

"Then...he Never Lay with you atole," Keene answered. "For you said hee did not ly with you before your fitte Nor after your fitte and in ycur fitte you whare not Sencebel hee laid with you." Mary Jenkins and John White were both sentenced to fifteen stripes at the post.[48]

In each case, the role which the neighbor women performed was traditional. In New England, however, this role had been reinforced and strengthened by the involvement of the courts in the most intimate details of daily life. This is why the position of young women like Mary Rolfe cannot be understood without examining the position of older women like Mary Bishop. Older women derived their authority both from their established position in the community and from gender. They not only understood enticement, they also knew its consequences--as no magistrate could. Proved in life, they were capable of recognizing and of judging sin. Experience-- not innocence--was the supreme female virtue in rural New England.

This chapter began by considering history as drama. It is perhaps appropriate that it should end by examining fiction as history. The eighteenth century has often been considered a pivotal point in the transformation from external to internal controls of sexual behavior. By the end of the seventeenth century in New England, the authority

of the county courts to enforce morality had already begun to slip. Fines replaced whippings, and convictions failed to keep pace with the growth in deviant behavior. Although churches continued to demand confession for fornication from members, their jurisdiction was narrow. At mid-century, family government was also under strain as parents lost the ability to control the timing of marriage for their children. The last years of the eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth saw the creation of a system of repression based upon internalized guilt-[49]

At the heart of the so-called "Victorian" morality which replaced the old "Puritan" repression was an altered concept of female sexuality. Man continued carnal, sensual, and devilish, but Woman assumed an active role as purifier of society. Female chastity became the touchstone of public virtue, purity the radiant light of the home. One of the most potent emblems of this transformation, as many historians have recognized, was Samuel Richardson's novel Pamela. Richardson took an old theme, the seduction of a maidservant by her master, and created an epic of middle-class morality. By resisting the increasingly frantic advances of Mr. B, the lovely Pamela won his admiration as well as his love.

Critics continue to argue over the meaning of the story. Was Pamela really as innocent and as artless as she appeared or was she simply a shrewd bargainer who knew how to play her virtue as the ultimate trump, refusing to become a mistress until she had become a bride? Esther Burr didn't like the novel. She couldn't understand how a virtuous woman could marry her oppressor, a man who had not only kidnapped her but attempted to rape her as well.[50] Most modern readers probably share Burr's perception. In the eighteenth century, however, Pamela was wildly popular especially among readers of an emerging middle class. It represented problems and solutions which they could understand and share. Keith Thomas may be right in suggesting that one consequence of the elevation of female chastity was the "total desexualization of women," and in arguing that Richardson was part of this process in his creation of an idealized heroine who was "delicate, insipid, fainting at the first sexual advance, and utterly devoid of feeling towards her admirer until the marriage knot was tied." [51]

Such an analysis reads backward toward Pamela from the nineteenth century. The novel takes on a different significance, however, if we read forward from the seventeenth-century folk world which we have described. Significantly, the three main characters in the long

Lincolnshire section of Richardson's novel, like the three main characters in the Rolfe-Greenland story, are a young woman, an old woman, and an aggressive male.

The climactic struggle of the novel is between Pamela and her "rough-natur'd Governess," Mrs. Jewkes, the old housekeeper who has been paid to watch over Pamela in the country house where she has been sequestered and eventually to deliver her up to the lecherous master. In creating the character of Mrs. Jewkes, Richardson drew upon the rich lore of English midwifery and witchcraft, playing upon the role of the old wife as a woman who mediated at the mysteries of creation and of death, and who, in traditional society as well as in literature, was capable of expanding "into a figure of great autonomous power, able to deny life as well as to quicken and affirm it as she chooses, a type of the primordial Great Mother who is also a terrible god." [52] In that final fateful scene in Lincolnshire, Mrs. Jewkes and Mr. B both stand over a prostrate Pamela whose virtuous fainting has ironically vanquished them both.

When this scene is set against the real life dramas from northern New England, its meaning becomes startlingly clear. Pamela's triumph was not in retaining her virtue but in seizing responsibility for her own behavior. Facing the tempter, she was not beguiled. If chastity was property in Richardson's novel, it belonged to the heroine, not to her

father or to any other man. Using her own assets, Pamela won the title of wife. But victory over the sensual advances of Mr. B. was only achieved by overcoming the governance of Mrs. Jewkes, who had failed in her role as protector. It is as though Richardson were saying that the lore of the old wife was insufficient to protect a young woman in the changing world of the eighteenth century. Bereft of parents and of guardians, she must acquire a new world of values, breaking out of the ancient community of women into a sequestered paradise of rosebuds and self-interest. The myth of Eve in northern New England is not a tale of expulsion from the garden but of its discovery.

1. The Greenland-Rolfe Case described below was reconstructed from depositions in Essex Files, III, 47-55, 65-67, 70, 75, 88-91. All dialogue is in the original. Greenland eventually removed to Kittery where he was continually in trouble and where his wife was accused of witchcraft. In June of 1672 the General Court ordered him to leave the jurisdiction. He settled in Piscataway, N.J. NLD, 288; NH Court Papers, I:1, p. 267.
2. Essex Files, III, 65, 66, 67, 70, 75, 88-90.
3. Laurence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage In England 1500- 1800, (London: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 523; Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," Journal of the History of Ideas, XX, 203.
4. Essex Files, III, 66.
5. Philip Aries, Centuries Of Childhood (New York: Vintage 1962), p. 103.
6. Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritans and Sex," The New England Quarterly, XV (December 1942), pp. 591-607.
7. Michael Zuckerman, "Pilgrims In The Wilderness: Community, Modernity, And The Maypole At Merry Mount," New England Quarterly, 50 (1977) 265-267.
8. Philip Greven, The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Childrearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 124-140.
9. Stone, Family, p. 484.
10. Thomas, "Double Standard," p. 213 and passim.
11. George Lee Haskins, Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts, (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 149-150.

12. Essex Files, III, 88, 48.
13. Haskin, Law and Authority, 149; Morgan, "Puritans and Sex," p. 602.
14. William H. Whitmore, editor, The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts. Reprinted from the Edition of 1660 (Boston, 1889), 257. quoted in Morgan, "Puritans and Sex," 601. Morgan missed the significance of this point, though he notes anxiety about potential abuse of the right of a woman to accuse her lover. That such a law did expand female options was clearly understood by at least one Maine woman. She said the law made her "as free as a man." She could sleep with anyone she chose, accuse anyone she chose. MPCR, VI. Prominent families could not protect their sons from the fornication law. Despite contrary evidence, Lydia Spinnet's accusation made under oath in court and at the time of her travail was sufficient to convict George Hammond; MPCR, VI, 121-126.
15. Stone, Family, Sex, and Marriage, p. 623. Following David Flaherty, Stone believes New England courts gave up trying to punish a sin. The continuing conviction of married fornicators would argue against this. Between 1653-1727 the York County Court tried 274 cases of fornication; 61% of all cases involved married couples who had already married, clear evidence that they were concerned about a sin as well as about the economic problem of bastardy. MPCR, volumes 1-6.
16. Saltcnstall Papers, I, 214.
17. See especially "A Letter to her Husband, absent upon Publick employment," The Works of Anne Bradstreet, ed. John Harvard Ellis, p. 394-395.
18. Allan I. Ludwig, Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650-1815, (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), p. 155, 160.
19. New Hampshire Court Papers, VII, 225, 227.

20. In describing the efforts of colonial New Englanders to achieve sexual privacy, David Flaherty clearly demonstrates its lack. Privacy In Colonial New England, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), pp. 76-84.
21. Essex Files, VIII, 103.
22. Essex Files, V, 351-354; MPCR, I, 85;
23. Essex Files, II, 35;
24. Essex Files, II, 420;
25. Essex Files, V, 351-354.
26. Essex Files, V, 228-229; Fusell, English Countrywomen, 27; Stone, Family, Sex, and Marriage, p. 520.
27. MPCR, I, 176.
28. Essex Files, IV, 269-270.
29. MPCR, VI, p. 98; MPCR, II, 196; NLD, 247, 304, 427, 428.
30. John Demos, "John Godfrey and His Neighbors: Withcraft and the Social Web in Colonial Massachusetts," WMQ, Third Series XXXII:2 (April 1976), pp. 242-265, clearly describes this phenomenon.
31. Forty-two of 76 single women named in fornication cases in Maine Court records, 1680-1727 can be traced in Noyes, Libbey, & Davis, Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire. Thirty of these 42 (71%) eventually married, usually someone other than the person accused.

32. Morgan, "Puritans and Sex," p. 594 and passim; Eli Faber, "Puritan Criminals: The Economic, Social, and Intellectual Background to Crime in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts," Perspectives in American History, XI (1977-78), p. 85.
33. Essex Files, 52.
34. Sherry Ortner shows the interlocking of biology, culture, and psychology in "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?", in Woman, Culture, & Society, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 67-87.
35. e.g. Cotton Mather, Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion, (Boston, 1692), p. 50., "It is indeed a piece of great Injustice, that every Woman should be imputed unto all the Sex." I have never found a reference to original sin in the general sense as "Eve's Sin." As in the New England Primer, Puritan's assumed "In Adam's fall we die all."
36. Natalie Davis has noted the general imputation of instability and disorder to women in European medical as well as religious thought. See Women On Top, Society and Culture in Early Modern France, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 124-125.
37. This is a consistent theme of wartime narratives; see Chapter 10.
38. The Works of Aristotle, (Philadelphia, 1798) pp. 16-19.
39. Stone, Family, Sex, and Marriage, p. 281. For typical court cases, see MFCR, I, 85; II, 196; Essex Files, VIII, 385. The manuscript church records of both Haverhill and Bradford (Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.) have abundant examples of confessions before the church. For example, in 1719 "Hannah Eastwood wife to Thomas--who in her widowhood had been Guilty of fornication w^c she publicly confessed" owned

the covenant.

40. To "play the rogue" with a woman was to copulate with her, presumably dishonorably. "Roger" was a colloquial name for penis.
41. Essex Files, V, 21-22.
42. Essex Files, III, 194.
43. MPCR, I, 14-143.
44. Essex Files, V, 52-55.
45. MPCR, III, 378-380.
46. MPCR, I, 142-143.
47. Essex Files, V, 54-55.
48. MPCR, III, 379.
49. For a concise statement and some interesting evidence of this hypothesis, see Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, "Premarital Pregnancy in America 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, V (Spring 1975), 537-570.
50. Laurie Crumpacker and Carol Karlsen, Paper delivered at Fourth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Mt. Holyoke College, August 25, 1976.
51. Thomas, "Double Standard," 214-215.
52. Robert A. Erickson, "Mother Jewkes, Pamela, and the Midwives," E.L.H., 43 (Winter 1976), pp. 500-516. Erickson shows direct links between seventeenth and eighteenth-century midwifery manuals and Richardson's

symbolism and language, and relates Richardson's use of midwifery symbolism to that of Dickens and Swift. He also shows the symbolic powers of Pamela as a "cunning woman," suggesting a contest here between an old witch and a young witch.

Chapter Six

Consort

Although an occasional girl named "Eathsheba" or "Bathshua" appears in New England records, there are few if any "Eves." The name of the first woman conveyed imagery too mixed for popularity. Much better to call a daughter Hannah or Sarah after one of the paragons of the Old Testament or to name her Mary in honor of the three faithful Marys of the New. Because of Eve every woman pledged obedience to her husband and suffered pain in childbearing. Yet surprisingly, at one level of self-conscious culture, Eve not only symbolized the trials of mortality but its greatest joys. She was not just the first sinner but also the "fair consort" of Eden.

When Denis de Rougemont said that "Happy love has no history," he was not talking about seventeenth-century England and America.[1] Lyric poets, from John Donne to Anne Bradstreet, embraced the very subject which most writers in the western world have spurned, "the fruitful contentment of the settled couple," while the most influential poet of the century, John Milton, built an epic upon the idyllic marriage of Eden. Seventeenth-century poetry echoed preaching and by the middle of the eighteenth century popular culture in both countries echoed

seventeenth-century poetry. In New England, the preacher's Eve gradually became Milton's Eve and Milton's Eve, transmogrified by newspaper versifiers and provincial painters, became the apotheosis of true womanhood.

In the process, the notion of consort underwent a subtle transformation. Sermons, literature, paintings, and even embroidery, taken together with such glimpses of private attitudes as are available in letters, depositions, and diaries suggest that the perceived base of true harmony in marriage veered from a common religiosity toward an idealized sexuality. We are talking about ideals, of course. As an historical concept, "marital harmony" is difficult to measure. Stylized expressions of marital harmony, on the other hand, can be studied.

* * *

In New England the obvious place to begin is with sermons. For the publishing ministry the essential nature of marriage was not to be found in the harsh commands of God to a fallen Adam and Eve but in Paradise itself. As Samuel Willard explained it, "God performed the first marriage that ever was." [2] The key scripture was the eighteenth verse of the second chapter of Genesis. When God saw Adam alone in the garden of Eden, he resolved to make "an help meet for him." Though the word meet in this passage has often been corrupted to mate as in the folk term helpmate, it is an

adjective not a noun. Eve was to be "an help" fitted or suitable for Adam. "Women are Creatures without which their is no comfortable Living for man," exclaimed Anne Bradstreet's John Cotton in a wedding sermon entitled A Meet Help. Only blasphemers "despise and decry them, and call them a necessary Evil," he continued, "for they are a necessary Good: such as it was not good that man should be without." [3]

William Secker, an English minister whose sermons were reprinted in America, summarized a century of homiletic literature when he said that a good wife must help her husband to Piety, through the "ferventness of her Excitation;" to Society, by the "fragrantness of her conversation;" to Progeny, by the "fruitfulness of her education"; and to Prosperity, by her "faithful preservation." [4] Women helped to fulfill the spiritual, emotional, sexual, and material needs of men. For this end were they created. Most sermons on marriage or on family government acknowledged all four objectives, but in most the real key to marital harmony is piety. Preachers accepted separate social roles for husbands and wives--men provided, women preserved--but the focus of their sermons was usually upon the common responsibilities of men and women as spirit children of God. Meetness lay in similarity rather than in difference.

Secker said that because the angels stood too far above and the animals too far below, God made Eve, a "parallel line drawn equal" to Adam, taken not from the head "to claim superiority, but cut of the side to be content with equality." Puritan ministers did not use "equality" in the twentieth-century sense. Certainly women were to obey. The great God decreed it. But the subjection of wife to husband was never to be confused with the subjection of child to parent or of servant to master. "The Submission here required," wrote Samuel Willard, "is not to be measured by the Notation or import of the Word itself, but by the Quality of the Relation to which it is applied." [5] Thus, "equality" did not refer to the structure of marriage, which remained heirarchal, but to a reciprocity of affection and understanding which transformed commands into helpfulness and obedience into support. The distance between Head and Help diminished when the two partners learned to act as one.

Over and over again New Englanders heard the love of man and wife compared to the bond between Christ and the Church. Although the analogy obviously ratified the authority of men over women, ministers seldom explored this implication, preferring to draw upon the emotional dimension of marriage to personalize the believer's relationship with Christ. In idealizing the spiritual oneness of men and women, some ministers elevated the physical oneness as well.

The converted Christian was safe in the arms of a "Head, and Husband, and Saviour," said John Allin.[6] Cotton Mather pushed the analogy even further in a sermon based upon John 14:20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." The covenant of grace, he explained, "appears under the Character of a Marriage, because from this Time, there is an Union, and not only a Legal Union, but also a Vital Union, between the Redeemer and the Believer." [7] If the Christ/Church relationship became a model for human authority, an idealized husband/wife relationship became even more profoundly an emblem of divine love.

William and Malleville Haller have argued that "from magnifying the religious significance of marriage, Puritan thought easily proceeded to magnify the emotional, romantic, and idealistic aspects of the marital relation." [8] Such a conclusion is easily supported. Consider Anne Bradstreet's poetic address to her husband, "My head, my heart, mine Eyes, my life, / My joy, my magazine of earthly store," or Cotton Mather's couplet in memory of his deceased wife, "The Torch that gave my House its pleasant Light, / Extinguish'd leaves it in how dark a night!" [9] Husband and wife could never forget, however, that they were wedded to Christ before they were married to each other. To place too great an emphasis upon the emotional dimension of marriage was

almost as bad as ignoring it altogether. In Secker's terms, the fragrant Society of a good wife was important, but it must be balanced with the other ends of marriage-- Progeny, Prosperity, and above all Piety.[10] Thus, religious idealism was both a spur and a bridle to human affection.

"Ms Mechison tells me often she fears that I love you more than god," Mehitable Parkman wrote to her husband, Deliverance, as he prepared to sail out from Salem harbour in June of 1683. Mehitable was worried about her husband's health (he had not felt well when he left home), and she was anxious about the dangers of "the sea & enimys," but she was also concerned about her neighbor's remark. It put her "in mind of that cripptr he that loves father or mother more than me is not worthee of me." She closed her little missive with a prayer, then handed the messenger a more tangible token of her devotion.

oh my Dear pray that we might live more by faith on
jesus Christ that sce we may be prepared for a
better life I sent you a bucket of the best sucrye
of strabyrs by Mr Bedel I heeg your exceptance of
my lcvē thear in-[11]

Affection, piety, and a bucket of strawberry preserves! Mehitable Parkman's letter summarizes the Puritan doctrine of marriage as well as any sermon.

Not until the second quarter of the eighteenth century did John Milton's description of marital felicity capture the imagination of New England writers, but when it did,

Paradise Lost was on its way to becoming "not so much a secondary Book of Genesis as a substitute for the original--at least as far as the pictorial imagination was concerned." [12] Milton's concept of marriage derived from the English sermon tradition, but the visual qualities of his poetry nourished visions which Puritan preaching had tended to suppress. Devout New Englanders knew that God created Eve, but through Milton they could see Adam's wounded side with "life blood streaming fresh" miraculously close and heal as the divine hand fashioned the first woman from the severed rib, creating a creature "so lovely fair/
That what seemed fair in all the world, seemed now/
Mean." [13] Through Milton the "honourable chastity" of the sermon tradition became the naked innocence of the first parents as Eve's swelling breast met Adam's "under the flowing Gold/ of her loose tresses." Through the magic of Milton's poetry, the scriptural Eden became a tangible paradise with nectarine fruits and frisking beasts crowned with a nuptial tower where "each beauteous flower,/ Iris all hues, roses, and Gessamin/ Reared high their flourish'd heads." [14]

On the doctrinal level, Milton's description of marriage offered nothing new. Like the ministers, he acknowledged the inequality of men and women, and like them, he softened inequality with love.

For contemplation hee and valour formd, For softness
 shee and sweet attractive Grace, Hee for God only, shee
 for God in him:

Adam's broad visage was marked with "Absolute rule" just as
 Eve's golden curls implied

Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway
 And by her yielded, by him best receivd.[15]
 Voluntary obedience and gentle rule transformed the "quality
 of the relation," just as Willard had said.

Because Paradise Lost is a poem, not a sermon, it
 exists within two traditions. In the long discourse between
 Adam and the angel in Book VIII, Milton attempted to wed
 poetic convention and reformist theology, harmonizing a
 courtier's contemplation of his beloved with a preacher's
 discourse on family government. Adam admits he is tempted
 to worship Eve.

when I approach
 Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
 And in herself compleat, so well to know
 Her own, that what she wills to do or say,
 Seems wisest, vertuous, discreetest best.

The angel cautioned him, urging him to cultivate wisdom as
 well as love and above all to develop "self esteem." Like
 the ministers, he admonished

of that skill the more thou knowest,
 The more she will acknowledge thee her Head,
 And to realities yield all her shows.

Adam accepted the angel's instructions. His love would not
 be a rarified feeling directed toward an unapproachable
 perfection but a tangibly realized domestic bliss. Neither

Eve's beauty nor her "genial bed" so much delighted him as

those graceful acts,
Those thousand decencies that daily flow
From all her words and actions mixed with Love
And sweet compliance, which declare unfeigned
Union of Mind, or in us both one Soule;
Harmonie to behold in wedded pair
More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear.[16]

The sentiment is Puritan, the setting is not. Although the consort in Milton's paradise is very much like the consort of the sermons, the infusion of poetic conventions--the transcendent beauty of the woman, the adoration of the man, the elaboration of the complementary virtues of grace and wisdom, softness and valour--shifted the focus ever so subtly from a harmony built upon sameness to a harmony built upon difference. Eve's wayward ringlets and her rosy bower remain in memory when the philosophical passages are forgotten.

In August of 1727, the New England Weekly Journal published a long poem in praise of Paradise Lost. The poet devoted one and one-half lines to "happy Adam" and seventeen and one-half lines to "heav'nly fair, divinely beauteous Eve," whose coral lips, waving tresses, and snowy breast had so impressed him that he could not contain his muse.

Forgive, fair Mother, O forgive thy son
That with thy beauty thus enamour'd grows
Forgive this vain redundancy of words.[17]

Redundant or not, tributes to Eve became standard fare in eighteenth-century periodicals in England and America, while

in the same years urbane clergymen admitted Milton's mellifluous verse to the pulpit.

The most striking evidence of the idealization of Eve in eighteenth-century New England comes not from print, however, but from paint. John Smibert's arrival in America in 1729 marked a new era in New England painting. There had been portrait painters in the colonies before, but none quite like him. Smibert had been trained in Godfrey Kneller's studio in London and was now prepared to settle in Boston and paint the provincial gentry in the finest baroque manner. Dozens of happy Adams could now see their beauteous Eves framed in gilt. Smibert would be followed by a trio of native-born artists--Robert Feke, John Greenwood, and Joseph Badger--and by at least one itinerant Englishman--Joseph Blackburn, all of whom would be surpassed in the third quarter of the eighteenth century by America's first great painter, John Singleton Copley. These six men varied widely in talent, but they shared a vocabulary derived from English academic painting and beyond that from a common fund of folklore and romance which had always placed rosedbuds in the hands of white-skinned maidens.[18]

Seen on the flat canvases of Badger or through the dazzling surfaces of Copley, upper-class women in New England were tiny-waisted, full-bosomed, raven-haired creatures suspended in time. The idealized sexuality of

these paintings, like the idealized sexuality of Milton's poem, was conventional. The significance is not in the image itself, but in its use. These sex symbols were real women, circumspect and often demonstrably pious matrons, mothers and mistresses of houses. When he painted Mrs. Charles Apthorp of Boston with an open copy of Paradise Lost, Robert Feké explicitly linked the visual and the poetic image.[19] Like Milton, the provincial painters wedded fantasy and domesticity, bringing together two values that had often been separated in the western world.

The painters' Eve, like Milton's Eve, graced a "woody theater/ Of stateliest view," a stylized panorama which sometimes included a quite tangible New England mansion set in the misty background. Although even the most genteel of ministers continued to intone the old themes of redemption, for some of their listeners the focus of happiness seems to have shifted from Heaven to the outskirts of Salem or Portsmouth. A country estate became an emblem of Eden if not a Paradise regained. Asked to compose some lines on visiting the garden retreat of a young Englishwoman, Benjamin Colman of Boston had written:

Such Eden's Streams, and Banks, and tow'ring Groves;
Such Eve herself, and such her Muse and Love.[20]

Not surprisingly, Colman was the first Boston minister to quote Paradise Lost from the pulpit. The pious gentry of his circle--the Pepperrells of Kittery, the Brownes of

Salem, the Partridges of Newbury--had begun to hang portraits by Smibert in the spacious entries of their Palladian mansions.[21] They were imitating the English gentry, of course, as the better sort had always done in New England, validating social position with material objects, with silver snuff boxes, embroidered waistcoats, and carved furniture, but in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, there was a new focus upon the fair consort at the center of this cushy world.

In 1683 Mervin Parkman apologized for her single-minded love for her husband. In 1750, William Browne was ready to advertize his total absorption in his wife. Salem folks were both amused and awed at the affectations of Browne, who in 1737 acquired a carriage and a bride, fifteen-year-old Mary Burnet, wealthy daughter of the former governor of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and New York. As one rhymester put it:

Billy Brown has come to town
With his lady fair;
To make a splash, he spent his cash
Upon a coach and pair.

Browne was about to make an even bigger splash. On top of the highest hill in Danvers he built his bride an eighty-foot long country house (known as "Brown's Folly" to the rustics) which became one of the cultural wonders of Essex County. As one gentleman tactfully noted, the site was "very airy," but the house itself was impressive, with a

domed ballroom at the center complete with a gallery for musicians and at one end a gentleman's library. When Alexander Hamilton visited Salem in 1745, he found the house still unfinished and the gentleman a mite pious for his taste. When Captain Goelet, a New York merchant, arrived five years later, the house was still incomplete and Browne was not only somber but in mourning. After eight years of marriage and six pregnancies, his fair lady had fallen into a deep consumption and died-[22]

Browne's grief was as stylish as his carriage. In New England, resignation had always been the proper response to death. "God was pleased to renew my sorrows by taking away the Desire of mine eyes; viz. my dearly beloved wife Sarah," a typical diary entry began, ending with the ritualistic acceptance, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Let me say--blessed be the name of the Lord." [23] But, in William Browne's milieu, pining for one's beloved had become evidence of refined sensibility rather than underdeveloped faith.

For five years, he nursed his misery ("He was dotingly fond of her, she being a charming lady," Goelet observed) and at last wrote his own will. "If I shall die elsewhere than Salem," he began

I direct that my body be conveyed there and buried in the Tomb aforesaid, and that it be layed nearest to the body of my dear, my beloved, my affectionate, and my constant wife, friend and companion, Mary the daughter of Govr Burnet

deceased....And I do hereby direct that my executors do with all convenient speed purchase in England, a handsome marble monument, with my late wife's bust on it, to be cut by the same hand if living, and in the same manner as that of Mrs. Shirley, late wife to his Excellency Gov. Shirley, and on this monument shall be an inscription, declaring it was executed by my order, in honor to the virtues and amiable graces, of the best wife, and the best earthly friend, that any mortal could boast of.[24]

Painted by Simbert in life, the physical image of Mary Burnet Browne would be translated to marble in death. Here there would be no impersonal epitaph, no pious recitation of spiritual virtues, no grim death's head, but a physical image of a "friend".

To understand the full significance of this new emphasis upon the person of the beloved, we must return for a moment to painting. A few paired portraits from northern New England convey the old sermon image of marriage, the idea of husband and wife as sturdy mates and fellow travelers on the road to salvation. In several of Greenwood's paintings and in a few of Copley's, man and wife appear in solid oneness, elbow to elbow on their separate canvases, white wig echoed by ruffled cap, his solid ledger by her equally solid Bible. These grave couples are unmistakably "yokefellows" in the Puritan tradition.[25] But such portraits are rare. Far more frequently in the eighteenth century, wives were transported to a vaporous landscape redolent of innocence and eternal

youth.

Lines from a poem by James Bowdoin perfectly describe the portrait image of his own wife Elizabeth, yet Elizabeth Bowdoin of Boston might have been Mary Pepperrell of Kittery, Margaret Gerrish of Salem, or Sally Sayward of York. The image is the same. In all these portraits, the woman is young--

Now view the maid, the love-inspiring maid,
With virtue and with modesty array'd...

She is raven haired--

See down her neck the charming locks descend;
And, black as jet, in waving ringlets end:
The jetty locks, as down her neck they flow,
The lovely white to great advantage show.

And she is buxom--

Her tempting breasts the eyes of all command,
And gently rising court the am'rous hand.
Their beauty and proportion strike the eye,
And art's best skill to equal them defy.[26]

The one concession to mortality seems to have been in the color of the hair. Eve's golden tresses remained in Eden, but her youth, her innocence, the waywardness of her flowing hair, and the whiteness of her tremulous bosom became emblems of upper-class womanhood in New England. The image was both sexual and respectable. "Tempting breasts" did not make a maiden any less modest, even though with every breath they courted an "am'rous hand."

The emphasis upon bosoms is part of a larger impulse to idealize and to exaggerate the differences between men and women. In painting as in poetry, the focus was on young womanhood, on the moment of flowering. While young husbands often appeared older than they were, wearing white wigs and buttoning elaborate waistcoats over the crescent-shaped profiles common to middle-age, quite the opposite was true for their wives. Unless widowed, middle-aged women retained the raven hair and narrow waists of their youth. Elizabeth Oliver, fifty-one year old wife of the honourable Daniel Oliver, eulogized at her death for her prudence, dignity, piety, "wise and faithful Counsels and Admonitions," as well as for her wit, was painted by Smibert in 1729 in the pinch-waisted, low-cut gown of a bride, her dark locks cascading to her shoulders.[27]

The same themes--innocence, playfulness, and idealized sexuality--were blazoned in eighteenth-century needlework. In the second quarter of the century pastoral "courting pictures" absorbed the fantasies and energies of wealthy young women educated in Salem or Boston. In their framed embroideries, gallant gentlemen paid court to fair ladies in imaginary gardens, often within sight of a carefully stitched country mansion. The designs were thematically linked to other panels and samplers which explicitly portrayed the first garden, placing Adam and Eve among the

same oversized blossoms, fanciful insects, and leaping deer. Derived from the Bible or from pastoral conventions, New England embroideries celebrated a domestic kingdom, a harmonious natural world centered upon the love of man and woman. Framed, stretched over the seat of a Chippendale chair, or hung from the frame of a sumptuous bed, these laboriously wrought flowers and birds, fish and fruit proclaimed and established the private paradise for which they were created.[28]

Crewel bedhangings attributed to Mary Bulman of York bring together the old piety with the new sensibility in a richly symbolic way. According to tradition, Mistress Bulman began the hangings upon hearing of the death of her husband Alexander, a physician serving with Pepperrell at Louisburg. "I hear that dear Mrs. Bulman is graciously supported under her heavy bereavement," Benjamin Colman wrote Pepperrell in November of 1745, concluding with the standard condolence, "What can not grace carry the tenderest soul thro? a soul espoused to Christ can surrender every thing to him & cast itself & its orphans upon him." Mary Bulman was indeed espoused to Christ. At the knee of old Parson Mody she had been trained in the necessity of submitting to the divine will.[29] Now--if the provenance of the hangings is correct--she would discover the aesthetic as well as the spiritual powers in resignation.

For five years she worked, stitch by stitch
transforming her conjugal bed into a rosy bower,
embellishing side panels, valence, head cloth, and coverlet
with leafy garlands, boldly wrought vines, and extravagant
blossoms never seen in any garden in York. In this floral
paradise tiny birds flew to ruffled buds twice their size
while heart-shaped strawberries sprang to the height of
shrubs. Lest any one mistake the meaning of her art, Mary
worked into the valence a poem by Isaac Watts:

Sweet muse descend and bless the shade
And bless the evening grove
Business and noise and day are fled
And every care but love.

But hence ye wanton young and fair
Mine is a purer flame
No Phillis shall infect the air
With her unhallowed name.

Jesus has all my powers possest
My hopes my fears my joys
He the Dear Sovereign of my breast
Shall still command my voice.

Some of the fairest choirs above
Shall flock around my song
With joy to hear the name they love
Sound from a mortal tongue.

His charms shall make my numbers flow
And hold the falling floods
While silence sits on ev'ry bough
And bends the listening woods.

I'll carve our passion on the bark
And every wounded tree
Shall drop and bear some mystic mark
That Jesus dy'd for me.

The swains shall wonder when they read
Inscrib'd on all the grove
That heaven itself came down and bled

To win a mortals love.[30]

The theme was an old one: the love between man and woman pointed to the higher love between Christ and the converted Christian, but embroidered on linen it was twice removed from the seventeenth-century sermons where it originated. Translated by Watts into the conventional imagery of pastoral courtship, it was carried by Mary Bulman into the tangible Paradise of an eighteenth-century dwelling. Like Mehitabel Parkman, Mary turned to Christ for consolation in her trouble, but in so doing she turned earthward, beautifying her house. She did not confide her resignation to the quiet of a diary but broadcast it through the form she knew best, adorning the one piece of furniture which best symbolized the marital felicity which she had lost. Mary Bulman's luxurious bed, though dedicated to Jesus, subtly but unmistakably exalted the needlewoman who created it. Both housewife and Bride of Christ, she left a sermon in flat stitch, an epithalamion in worsted.

In 1750 as in 1650, New Englanders acknowledged the multiple aims of marriage: a good wife provided material, spiritual, emotional, and sexual comforts. Within this common framework, however, the balance shifted. Seventeenth-century Puritans found Eve's "meekness" primarily in her spiritual oneness with Adam; eighteenth-century poets and painters discovered her

physical and personal charms, celebrating a material paradise somewhere within reach of Boston. "Hannah, when will come the day that I shall once more see and kiss the print of your hand," an Ipswich sea captain wrote his wife in February of 1747.[31] Among the gentry, romantic effusion had become more common in northern New England, but it is important to recognize that new forms coexisted with old. At almost the same moment another Ipswich man was sending this sober missive to his spouse: "I long to see you & my poor children & its my Earnest prayer to God that you and I may be kept in his fear & in a humble Submission to his holy will." [32] Love too was a matter of style.

* * *

The ideal of consort is one of the most pervasive themes in New England sermons, art, and literature. Yet even in the earliest years, the Puritan colonies had their share of domestic discord, as the clacking and clanging in county court records shows. Though the economic and sexual ends of marriage could be enforced at least partly through law, the quest for consort, for the fulfillment of the highest emotional and spiritual needs, was more difficult to achieve. "A woman ought to be a meet help for a man," Faith Black's neighbors told an Essex County Court. Daniel Black was a violent man, given to fits of rage and jealousy, but in their view his wife had brought much of the trouble on

herself. Faith had been unfaithful to the Biblical ideal. She gadded about, neglecting her wash and forgetting to feed the swine. What was worse, she was too friendly with John How. "Faith might live as well with Daniel Black as any poor woman in Topsfield," her brother deposed, but her proud spirit had provoked him. What could the magistrates do? They ordered both husband and wife to sit together in the stocks for an hour and then go home and live peaceably-[33]

Colonial courts could demand cohabitation and sexual fidelity but not harmony. They could require husbands to support their wives and wives to return reasonable service to their families, but though they could fine wife-beaters and scold shrews, they could not insist upon love. At their most pragmatic, the sermons recognized the chasm between Eden and Earth. "It is next of all to be lamented, when Consorts can not make a Consort, but cease to be Desirable unto one another," Cotton Mather declared-[34] Ironically Mather's most ecstatic pronouncements upon marriage were made after his third wife's refusal to sleep with him taught him not to "so foolishly dote as I have done, upon a Person who treats me with such a matchless Ingratitude and Malignity."-[35] But the purpose of sermons was not to document dissonance but to surmount it. Painting and poetry were even further removed from the grating and grinding of life. It is hardly accidental that the Eden of the

embroideries existed outside space or time or that the Eve of the portraits was pictured as a young and innocent bride.

In church and in court, New Englanders were told that the first remedy for marital conflict was individual reformation and self-control. In cases of severe disruption, however, divorce was at least a possibility. For Puritans, marriage was not a sacrament but a civil contract between two individuals, and like other contracts it could be broken. In the seventeenth century, county and general courts in Massachusetts dissolved marriages on grounds of adultery, desertion, neglect, and cruelty. Although records are incomplete, women seem to have sued more frequently and more successfully than men. This advantage was lost in the eighteenth century as the governor and council assumed more uniform jurisdiction, but in either century, though rare, divorce was available to both sexes and to all classes, as it had never been in England. Between 1697 and 1785, the British House of Lords granted ninety private acts of divorce--all to men. During the same period, Massachusetts, with a population roughly three percent of England's, granted 110 divorces, forty seven of these to women.[36]

The numbers are small but significant. In her study of eighteenth-century divorce records, Nancy Cott found a marked increase in the number of women seeking and receiving

divorces after 1764, suggesting that the implications of Puritan marriage theory were only gradually accepted in practice, and that the era of Independence brought increasing self-assertion in private as well as public life. Sexual fidelity had always been expected of both partners, for example, but not until the mid 1770s was fidelity "regularly enforced upon husbands by the threat of divorce." [37]

Our discussion might turn at this point toward the sources of harmony in colonial marriage. Yet such an exercise might prove as inconclusive as it would be difficult. We know, for example, that Cotton Mather read to his wife in bed. [38] Does this suggest a companionable pattern in eighteenth-century marriage? Or was it simply an extension of Mather's pompous do-goodism? Mistress Mather cannot tell us whether she was edified or bored. We know too that Samuel Sewall frequently attended mixed dinner parties without his spouse. Does this fact indicate divergence of male and female social life among upper-class Bostonians or only that Hannah Sewall was often indisposed? [39] With effort, patterns of social interaction within marriage might be wrested from such sources, but determining their impact upon marital satisfaction would prove difficult indeed. Some questions must remain unresolved. It is perhaps enough to recognize that in

colonial New England, as today, one couple's music was another couple's noise.

In evaluating the idealistic portrayals of Eden, however, two observations are in order. First, in early New England, as in the present, "marital love" can seldom be isolated from all the other considerations, personal and practical, which shaped the patterns of daily life. This is perfectly evident in letters which George Corwin, a Salem gentleman, sent to his wife during the months he was absent with the Louisburg expedition. He had ingested some of the conventions of eighteenth-century romance, but he was a very mortal and somewhat temperamental Adam writing to a very busy Eve. Enclosing a six pound bill as a token of his love, Corwin passionately wished it were in his power to make it six thousand. He also hoped Sarah would remember to pin up a notice at Mr. Sparhawk's church begging prayers on his behalf, and to send butter, cider, and "anything that's good to Eat." Later, enclosing a pistole in gold and a piece of eight for each little one, he wished it were in his power to make it ten thousand. Meanwhile where were the shirts she had promised and the new pair of breeches? Had she been to visit Mr. Lynde? How were the children? Many nights he had dreamt that the baby disturbed his sleep, but "alas I wake, & find no such Pleasure." Why hadn't she written? He knew she had been ill, but when a vessel

arrived with no message, he could not help but take it hard--"out of sight, & out of mind, which I am very sorry for." Did he detect a note of complaint in her last letter?

My Dear I always Remember the regard I stand In both as a Husband & father & am Sure I should never have gone upon the Buisness I am now Engaged In had I not been in those Circumstances If you mentioned yt as Reason to Induce me to Return I am sure you might have omitted it, for no one has or Can have a greater Regard to Both Wife & Children than I have & you may Depend That I shall Return as Soon as my Buisness will possibly Admitt off.

By the way, how was the farming going? Since she had not mentioned it, he assumed all was well.[40] Real marriage existed outside of Eden in a world where cows had to be milked, wars had to be fought, and mothers had to tend to crying babies in the night.

A second factor demands even further emphasis--the involvement of outsiders in family relations. Eve and Adam were alone in the garden of Eden in a way impossible for women and men in colonial New England. We have already noted the intrusion on neighbors in private affairs, a pattern which continued to the end of the eighteenth century. Neighbors were primary deponents in the divorce cases Nancy Cott studied. Even more crucial was the authority of parents. Except for the poor, livelihood and inheritance were closely tied. Marriage was never just a private contract between a husband and wife, it was an alliance of families and a linchpin in the social structure.

At its outset, it involved negotiations between parents and the ratification of the entire community through the publishing of banns.[41] A closer look at courtship suggests the conflict which might arise as men and women attempted to reconcile the economic, sexual, emotional, and spiritual demands of a union which was both personal and institutional.

Edmund Morgan has described three steps involved in a decision to marry in Puritan New England. First, a man decided that the time for marriage had arrived. Second, he selected a suitable person, paying careful attention to economic matters. Third, during a period of engagement or betrothal, he allowed his affection for the chosen person to develop. Since the decision to marry was independent of any interest in a particular person and since one's affections were not allowed to "settle" before one's estate, marriage became a rational choice among a number of possible partners.[42] As a rough description of Puritan assumptions, Morgan's scheme seems accurate enough--a man did not marry a woman because he loved her, he loved her because he had married her. In the case of a mature man, like Samuel Sewall, it may well have been followed in just such a methodical and practical way, but it glosses the potential for both personal and generational conflict in a decision which touched so many dimensions of life.

At the root of generational conflict was a conflict between head and heart. Parents could uphold the material and the spiritual values of marriage because they were detached from the emotional and sexual in a way that young men and women in their early twenties could never be. A young man could make the decision to marry without focusing on any one woman, but it is unlikely he could do so for purely practical reasons. Aside from the rising sap in his own blood, he was forced to think about women because that is probably what his friends were doing. Entries in the diary of one young ministerial candidate evoke the kind of atmosphere in which a decision to marry was made: "Came along from Rowley [with] Parker Noyes and his Bride. . . . Homen lodged her last Night going to be married. . . . Taried at Mr Turfs till half an hour after 9. Discourse there how many denials a man must take from a woman." [43]

Young women probably began to contemplate their future estate even earlier, having neither school nor apprenticeship to divert attention from their future vocation. The Salem Withcraft affair began when pubescent girls turned to fortune telling, dropping the white of an egg in a glass to ask "what trade their sweethearts should be of." [44] Half a century later, servant girls in a Marblehead boarding house managed to slip "a plate, knife, and fork with a blade bone of lamb tied up in a napkin"

under the bolster on Ashley Bowen's bed, coyly asking him next morning to tell of his dreams.[45] For upper class girls, courting pictures were an outlet for similar fantasies. There is a certain irony in the lush imagery of those embroideries. When girls finally acquired their material Eden they would spend their days weeding its flowers, feeding its animals, and preserving its fruits. But at least a married woman was responsible for her own garden, as no unmarried girl could be.

Fantasy was not invented by poets, nor did ordinary New Englanders have to rely upon sermons or treatises to learn of its dangers. There were sermons enough in daily life. In Ipswich, for example, there was poor Rachel Clinton, living in a little house by the river, year after year begging the magistrates for help in securing maintenance from her husband, Laurence, a drunkard and ne'er-do-well. She had married for love, offending her relatives and shocking her neighbors by using a small inheritance to buy his freedom when he was indentured to Master Cross. Because her mother and father were dead, she could follow her inclinations. Parents and young women could take heed. No sooner were Laurence and Rachel wed that her troubles began. He squandered her money and kept company with servant girls and though she petitioned the magistrates would hear nothing of divorce. (Bitterness would accumulate. Years later she

would be tried, though not convicted, as a witch-.)[46]

Still, affection was not to be trifled with. In Rachel Clinton's neighborhood lived Sarah Woodward, a young woman who consulted her parents but tried to ignore her feelings. She had been partial to Joseph Lee, a young man of the neighborhood, when a Maine fisherman named William Row sought her hand. Her parents, having a household of daughters to settle, were impressed with his energy and determination. Making inquiries, they found that he had a good reputation at the Isles of Shoals where he summered and seemed ambitious to "improve his estate." Sarah was at first unwilling to accept the match, but time and persuasion had their effect. The pressures were subtle, but real. "Sarah, have a care what you do," her mother cautioned, "If you can love him take him: and do not say that I persuaded you; its you that must live with him and not I." Sarah's aunt came to counsel with her, urging her to consider carefully, for it was much better to "break off now than after wards." Sarah told her she could love Row "well enough."

Not till the banns were published did Sarah muster courage to oppose her parents. It was too late. When she found a friend to write a letter breaking off the match, her father intervened. Sarah married the man her parents had chosen. Things went well enough, neighbors said, until

Joseph Lee began to frequent the house while William was fishing. When Lee joked about Sarah's husband, she defended him--but half seriously. "Why is he not as other men?" she bantered. "If you have bene a sea man as long as hee you would have had wrinkl's in your forehead." Eventually Sarah's aversion to her husband became open. Wounded and jealous, William left. Within a few months, Sarah was in Essex County Court on trial for her "dalliance" with Lee-[48]

What had happened? Some neighbors thought it was all Lee's fault, that if he had left Sarah alone, she would have been happy enough. William Hubbard, the town's minister, thought otherwise. Since Sarah had lived many years in his house as a maid, he thought he knew more about her than many others. He and his wife had never approved of the match, "foreseeing what has come to pass." As Puritan teaching expressed it; "They that marry where they affect not, will affect where they marry not."-[49]

Sarah's mother and her aunt had urged her to consult her feelings. Yet the ability of a daughter to express and perhaps even to recognize her own feelings depended upon the amount of autonomy she had been allowed in growing up. In a deferential society, a young woman who had been used to following her parents' direction might have great difficulty in trusting her own judgment, even when invited to think for

herself. Sometimes it was better not to try to think at all, but to let things happen as they would. Rebecca Cantelbury of Salem managed to marry the man of her choice by becoming pregnant. Her mother was furious. Months after the wedding, she told a neighbor that her son-in-law was a thief and a rogue, a thief because he had stolen "the best flower in her garden" and a rogue because he had "brought her to shame." Rebecca begged her mother to accept the man "that God had appointed" and insisted she was far more contented with him than with those her mother "nominated unto her." The neighbor agreed, urging Goody Cantlebury to forgive and forget. "By the providence of God they were brought together," she said. "There was no finger of God in bringing them together," the mother countered. "It was the mere act of the devil." [50]

There is evidence that premarital pregnancy increased in every decade of the eighteenth century, peaking just before the American revolution. Perhaps the devil had become more active--or young people less fearful. More probably, external controls of sexual behavior imposed by church, courts, and parents were breaking down while the new internalized morality which would become characteristic of the nineteenth century had not yet developed. Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus have argued that the custom of "bundling" which created such controversy in the last years

of the eighteenth century, was a "compromise between persistent parental control and the pressures of the young to subvert traditional familial authority." [51]

Perhaps. Yet in most accounts, bundling is described as a ritualized form of courtship. Marriage, not sociability, was the issue. A daughter who wanted to subvert her parents' authority, forcing a marriage against their wishes, could not be stopped by bundling. "Bastards are not at all times got/ In feather beds we know," proclaimed an old ballad titled "The Whore on the Snow Crust." [52] Bundling is more logically seen as an attempt to preserve traditional parental protection of daughters in a marriage system which increasingly emphasized sexual attraction. The existence of bundling in rural New England in the last years of the eighteenth century suggests that the focus on female sexuality so apparent in upper class portraits had its counterpart in the village.

Think of the dilemma which faced parents even in the repressive Puritan world of seventeenth-century Ipswich. They could not turn the important decision of marriage entirely over to their daughter (the lesson of Rachel Clenton), nor could they ignore her feelings, (the lesson of Sarah Row). In a less suspicious, more optimistic rural world, bundling might be a perfect solution. Once the choice of a mate had been made on practical grounds, the

young folks would have a chance to consult their affection in a controlled setting. If there were little property to settle, bundling made even more sense. According to the songster, it wasn't the custom which mattered, but the girl:

Cate Nance and Sue proved just and true,
 Tho' bundling did practise;
 But Puth beguil'd and proved with child,
 Who bundling did dispise.[53]

Perhaps Kate, Nancy, and Sue were less easily "beguil'd" because, like Pamela, they had learned to use their buxom beauty as a form of capital. But unlike Pamela they were still under parental government. A man who met a maid under the "kivers" in her own house (and not in the woods or a haymow), knew he could be held responsible for his behavior.

* * *

An anonymous courting ballad transcribed about 1786 described the first marriage in Eden in much less idyllic terms than ever appeared in public sermons or poems, but it came to the same conclusion--that marriage was ordained by God and that its chief end was the happiness of Man.

Adam at first was form'd of dust,
 As scripture doth record;
 And did receive a wife call'd Eve,
 From his Creator Lord.

From Adam's side a crooked bride,
 The Lord was pleas'd to form;
 Ordain'd that they in bed might lay
 To keep each other warm.

To court indeed they had no need,
 She was his wife at first,
 And she was made to be his aid,
 Whose origin was dust.

This new made pair full happy were,
 And happy might remain'd,
 If his help mate never ate,
 The fruit that was restrain'd.

Tho' Adam's wife destroyed his life,
 In manner that was awful;
 Yet marriage now we all allow
 To be both just and lawful...

Since it doth stand each man in hand,
 To happify his life,
 I would advise each to be wise,
 And choose a prudent wife.[55]

If Adam's wife destroyed his life, Eve's daughters might still bring comfort to the sons of men. A good wife was indeed a gift of God, ordained to warm a man's bed, mend his shirts, raise his childrer, and "happify his life."

When Ashley Bowen lay down in his bunk at three in the afternoon a hundred leagues from Marblehead, he imagined he saw a woman sitting on his sea chest. He saw her as clearly as if he had been awake; she had five moles on her right cheek and other distinguishing marks. Weeks later, he carried a friend's letter to a shoemaker's shop in Andover and found the very woman he had seen on board the sloop Olive. He did not know how to express his joy which he could only compare to the happiness of Christ's mother when she saluted Elizabeth and felt the Babe leap in her womb for joy. Knowing that Providence had led him to his bride, he did not waste any time finding "fair opportunity to examine her real moles and marks with real sweet kisses of real substance of lips and breasts and all the qualifications a

young woman could be endowed with to make a man happy."[56] Though Dorothy Chadwick was already being courted by another man, who had given her his mother's earrings and rings, Bowen persisted. Within a year they were married. For a young seaman from Marblehead finding the wife of his dreams was probably as much of Eden as any man could expect. It was now up to Dorothy to "happify" his life.

She did her part, though for her marriage did not prove an Eden. In twelve years, she gave birth to six children, including one sturdy little boy who managed to live six months even though he had been born without a palate and could not suck. In the thirteenth year of her marriage, she miscarried their seventh child, then grew ill herself and died.[57] Providence, which determined the beginning of her story, also determined the end.

1. Denis de Rougemont, Love In The Western World, trans. Montgomery Belgion, (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1956), p. 15.
2. Samuel Willard, A Compleat Body Of Divinity (Boston, 1726), p. 125.
3. John Cotton, A Meet Help: Or, a Wedding Sermon, Preached at New-Castle in New England, June 19, 1694 (Boston, 1699), p. 15, quoted in Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Family (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 29. James T. Johnson points out the significance of Genesis 2:18 in "The Covenant Idea and the Puritan View of Marriage," Journal of the History of Ideas, 32 (1971) p. 108-109. The classic description of Puritan concepts of marriage in England is William and Malleville Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love," Huntington Library Quarterly, V (1941-1942) pp. 235-272. Kathleen M. Davies has suggested that the positive view of women and of marriage evident in Puritan sermons was far from unique in European Christianity. See "The sacred condition of equality--how original were Puritan doctrines of marriage?", Social History 5 (May 1977) pp. 563-580.
4. William Secker, A Wedding Ring, (Boston 1690), n.p.
5. Samuel Willard, A Complete Body of Divinity, (Boston 1726) p. 612.
6. John Allin, The Spouse of Christ, (Cambridge, 1672), p. 9.
7. Cotton Mather, The Mystical Marriage, A Brief Essay on the Grace of the Redeemer Espousing the Soul of the Believer, (Boston 1728), p. 6. This sermon was published posthumously with the note that it had been approved by pastors as a present for young people, particularly for the celebration of a marriage.
8. Haller and Haller, "Puritan Art of Love," p. 265.

9. Anne Bradsreer, Several Poems, p. 240; Cotton Mather, Meat Out of the Eater, or, Funeral Discourses Occasioned by the Death of Several Relatives, (Boston, 1703), p.
10. Secker, A Wedding Ring, n.p.
11. Nehemiah Parkman to Mr. Deliverance Parkman, Salem, 1683, Curwen Family Papers, MS, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.
12. George F. Sensabaugh, Milton In Early America, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 48.
13. John Milton, Paradise Lost, (London, 1667), Book 7, Lines 1100-1110.
14. Paradise Lost, 4:492-497, 696-700.
15. Paradise Lost, 4:287-311.
16. Paradise Lost, 7:1183-1210, 1232-1244.
17. New England Weekly Journal, August 21, 1727. Sensabaugh, Milton In Early America, has identified the author of this poem as Mather Byles, an aspiring young Bostonian who enclosed these verses in a letter to Alexander Pope that same year. Sensabaugh also notes that an essay on love in The New England Courant, 1723, began with Milton's lines describing the conjugal caresses of Adam.
18. This section on New England portraiture is based upon my unpublished paper, "Rosebuds and Bibles: Feminine Iconography in Eighteenth Century New England Portraits," completed in fulfillment of a special research technique, University of New Hampshire, 1975. I examined 333 portraits by John Smibert (1729-1744); Robert Feke (1741-1750); John Greenwood (1745-1752); Joseph Blackburn (1752-1763); Joseph Badger (irregularly 1740-1765); and John Singleton Copley (1752-1774). In arriving at my list of paintings I

used: Jules David Prown, John Singleton Copley in America 1738-1774 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1966); Henry Wilder Foote, Robert Feke: Colonial Portrait Painter, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1930) and John Smibert, Painter: With a Descriptive Catalogue of Portraits; Alan Burroughs, John Greenwood in America, 1745-1754 (Andover, Mass.: 1943); Lawrence Park, "An Account of Joseph Badger, and a Descriptive List of His work," Proc. MHS (October, 1917, June, 1918) LI, 158-201 and "Joseph Blackburn Portrait Painter," Proc. AAS (October 1922), p. 270-329; John Hill Morgan and Henry Wilder Foote, "An Extension of Lawrence Park's Descriptive List of the Work of Joseph Blackburn," Proc. AAS, New Series, April 15, 1936-Oct. 21, 1936) 46, 15-81. There were obvious overlaps and misattributions in the earlier lists which I refined using journal literature. The final list included 232 paintings of women: 92 by Copley, 39 by Blackburn, 35 by Smibert, 27 by Feke, 24 by Badger, and 15 by Greenwood. I was able to examine paintings or photographs of 182 and relied upon detailed written descriptions of 50 others. I compared the painting of women systematically with 101 pendants of their husbands as well as informally with other male portraits in the catalogues of each painter.

19. This painting is reproduced in Foote, Robert Feke.
20. Quoted in Ebenezer Turell, The Life and Character of The Reverend Mr. Colman (Boston: 1749), p. 36. Coleman's affinity for Milton is described in Sensabaugh, Milton In America, p. 43-48.
21. The Notebook of John Smibert, ed. Andrew Oliver, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1969), pp. 88-94. One of Smibert's first patrons was Mary Partridge of Newbury, whom he painted in February of 1730. In October he painted her daughter, Mary Belcher, and the same month her sister-in-law Elizabeth Oliver. In November he painted a full-length portrait of Governor Belcher. William, Samuel, and Benjamin Browne were first painted in 1734 but Sir William was not painted until 1746.
22. "Browne Hill in History," Essex Institute Historical Collections 32 () 209-225. Browne's wife was painted by Smibert in 1738 with the mansion in the background.

Notebook of John Smibert p. 95.

23. John Pike, Journal, p. 135.
24. "Brownes Hill," p. 219.
25. Typical of these paintings are John Greenwood's "John Moffat, Esq." and "Mrs. John Mcffat" at the Currier Gallery, Manchester, N.H., reproduced in Mary Cochrane Rogers, Glimpses of An Old Scocial Capital (Boston, 1923), pp. 32, 36. But compare them with other paired portraits in this volume. Mrs. Arthur Browne, who was perhaps about the same age as Mrs. Moffat, was portrayed with flowing locks and low-necked gown, as were most of the younger women.
26. James Bowdoin, A Paraphrase On Part of the Oeconomy of Human Life, (Boston, 1759), p. 17. Part of this passage with a reproduction of the portraits appears in Marvin S. Sadik, Colonial and Federal Portraits At Bowdoin College, (Brunswick, Maine: 1966), p. 49-51.
27. Thomas Prince, Precious in the Sight of the Lord. - A Sermon Upon the Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Oliver, (Boston: 1735) p. 23-24.
28. Susan Burrows Swan, Plain & Fancy: American Women and Their Needlework, 1700-1850, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977) pp. 22, 57, 64, 106, 144-145 and A Winterthur Guide to American Needlework, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1976), pp. 32-40. Lloyd E. Hawes, "Adam and Eve in the decorative arts," Antiques, (September 1963), pp. 279-281; Anita Schorsch, Pastoral Dreams, (New York: Universe Books, 1977) p. 71; Glee Krueger, New England Samplers to 1840, (Old Sturbridge Village: 1978), figures 21, 22, 23.
29. Benjamin and Mary Colman to William Pepperrell, 21 September 1745, Mass. Hist. Soc. Col., 6th Series, X, 373. For evidence of Mary's piety and her affection for her "Revd and Dear Pature" see her letter to her husband, dated York, 5 June 1745, printed in Edward E. Bourne, History of Wells and Kennebunk, (Portland: B. Thuston & Company, 1875), p. 381-383.

30. The Fulman bedhangings are at the Old Gacl Museum, York, Maine. The provenance of the hangings is somewhat in doubt according to the curator, Eldridge Pendleton. The museum received them from descendents of the Bulmans, but they are not clearly listed in Mary's inventory which includes "worked brown holland hangings." (The background is natural linen.) The approximate date and coastal New England origin does seem correct, however, and the sentiment certainly corresponds to what we know of Mary Fulman's attitudes and outlook. The Watts poem is "Meditation in a Grove" from Horae Lyricae, 1706. For general background on the embroideries, see Ann Follard Howe, "Crewel Embroidered Bed Hangings in Old and New England," Bulletin: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, LXXI (1973), pp. 101-166.

31. To Hannah from James Craig, 1 February 1747, TS, Essex Institute, Salem Mass.

32. Benjamin Craft to his wife, 7 April 1745, MS, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

33. Essex Files, III, 193-194.

34. Mather, Meat Out of the Eater, p. 209.

35. Diary of Cotton Mather, 1709-1724, Mass. Hist. Soc. Col., 7th series, VIII (Boston 1911), pp. 752-753. entry for August, 1724, Cf Mystical Marriage, 1728.

36. D. Kelly Weisberg, "Under Greet Temptations Heer: Women and Divorce in Puritan Massachusetts," Feminist Studies, II (1975), 183-194, and Nancy F. Cott, "Divorce and the Changing Status of Women in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," William & Mary Quarterly, Third Series, XXXIII (October 1976), pp. 589-590, 612.

37. Cott, "Divorce," p. 611.

38. Diary of Cotton Mather, 1709-1724, pp. 335, 341, 376.
39. The Diary of Samuel Sewall 1674-1729, ed. M. Halsey Thomas, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 1973), e.g. I, pp. 76, 82, 92, 251, 282.
40. Curwen Papers, MS, Essex Institute, I, 8-13.
41. George Elliott Howard, A History of Matrimonial Institutions, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), pp. 145-147; Morgan, Puritan Family, pp. 32-33.
42. Morgan, Puritan Family, pp. 54-59.
43. Moses Hale Diary, MS, Old Newbury Historical Society, Newburyport, Mass.
44. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 1, 23.
45. The Journals of Ashley Bowen of Marblehead, Pub. Col. Soc. Mass, 44 (1973), p. 47.
46. Essex Files, III, 271-272, 457, ff., IV, 425; V, 267, 312, VI, 344.
47. Essex Files V, 188. This is the same case described in another context in chapter three. Other details, V, 143-147, 228-229.
48. Essex Files, V, 186-189.
49. William Secker, A Wedding Ring n.p.
50. Essex Files, II, 100, 217, 340.

51. Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, "Premarital Pregnancy in America 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, V (Spring 1975), pp. 537-570; see also Robert Gross, The Minutemen and Their World, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), p. 235.

52. Henry Reed Stiles, Bundling: Its Origins, Progress and Decline In America, (Mount Vernon, NY: Peter Pauper Press, n.d., rep. 1871), p. 67.

53. Stiles, Bundling, 66.

54. Nancy F. Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," in Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, xx A Heritage of Her Own, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 166 makes an important distinction between eighteenth-century "modesty" (a la Pamela) and nineteenth-century "passionlessness." One accepted the sexual nature of women; the other did not.

55. Dana Doten, The Art of Bundling, (New York: Countryman Press, 1938), pp. 148-152.

56. The Journals of Ashley Bowen (1728-1813) of Marblehead, ed. Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, Pub. Col. Soc. Mass. 44 (1973), pp. 47-49.

57. Ashley Bowen, pp. 49-50, 232, 271-273.

Chapter Seven

Travail

Modern writers sometimes state rather glibly that the only difference between the sexes is that women can bear children while men cannot. In the premodern world, this simple fact had enormous consequences. Reproduction was the axis of female life. A fortunate bride not only brought into marriage the pots and sheep and kettles provided by her father, but also a set of "childbed linen" inherited from her mother, a mysterious collection of bedding and apparel which was as much ceremonial as practical. For a prosperous woman, childbed linen was embellished with embroidery or lace, like her best petticoats or pillowcases.[1] "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children," God told Eve. The pain was real enough, but so was the joy. The rituals of childbed testified to the separateness, the subjection, and the mysterious power of womankind.

Labor and delivery were the defining events in a much larger cycle of reproduction. As one ancient midwifery manual explained it, "the whole time of a woman's pregnancy may very well be termed a kind of labour, for, from the time of her conception to the time of her delivery, she labours under many difficulties, is subject to many distempers, and [is] in continual danger, from one cause or another." [2]

Women in early New England extended the image of travail in the other direction as well. In describing their own sacrifices and toils, they were as likely to mention nursing as bearing the infant. The physical investment in childbearing did not begin with labor nor did it end at delivery. Birth, pregnancy, and lactation were three distinct stages in the reproductive history of women.

* * *

Giving birth was the central ritual in the community of women, the event which more than any other defined a common sisterhood and a shared mythology. Most men were no more explicit about this aspect of early American life than Zaccheus Collins of Lynn, who reported simply that he "fetched the women" before each of his children was born. But an occasional court record or diary entry gives numbers or names. Depositions in an Essex County case of 1657 reported a dozen women present at a Gloucester birth. A hundred years later, Matthew Patten of Bedford, New Hampshire, recorded the names of seven women gathered in the middle of the night when his wife's travail grew "smart." An eighth neighbor arrived in the morning. Sarah Smith, the wife of the first minister of Portland, Maine, may have set the record for neighborly participation in birth. According to family tradition, all of the married women living in the tiny settlement on Falmouth Neck in June of 1731 were

present when she gave birth to her second son.[3]

It would be helpful to know the rules which governed these assemblies. Were there particular tasks assigned according to consanguinity or status? Who, for example, supported the mother in delivery position? Who changed the linen? Did the midwife, the nurse, or the grandmother receive and wash the child? In this same-sex environment were there procedures to preserve modesty? Could newlywed women or unmarried girls observe the actual process of birth before they experienced it themselves? To such questions the records are silent. Childbirth in early America was almost exclusively in the hands of women, which is another way of saying that its interior history has been lost. Yet in male diaries and in court depositions for the period, there are shards of evidence which occasionally allow the historian to penetrate the silence and to make connections with the experience of women in other centuries and with the ragbag of English folk practice preserved in medical advice books of the period.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, childbirth in America became a private ordeal undergone in the antiseptic sanctity of a hospital, far from the eyes and ears of husbands, children, friends, and neighbors. The mother's safety--and presumably her dignity--were insured by the professional anonymity of the attendants. In the past

twenty years this medical sanctuary has gradually been undermined. Husbands have moved from the periphery into the labor room and finally into the delivery room itself. Very recently obstetricians themselves have come under attack. The home birth movement not only welcomes lay midwives but sometimes children, friends, and neighbors as well, making birth the semi-public event which it was in the traditional world.[4] But there is an important difference. In the past, the badge of entry was sex. Mothers rather than husbands, female friends rather than physicians, ministers' wives rather than ministers coached and assisted a woman in birth. A shared gender identity shaped each detail of the drama of delivery.

For many women the first stage of labor probably took on something of the character of a party. One of the mother's responsibilities was to provide refreshments for her attendants. The very names "groaning beer" and "groaning cakes" suggest that at least some of this food was consumed during labor itself. Midwifery manuals encouraged the mother to eat light but nourishing foods--broth, poached eggs, or toasted bread in wine--during labor and immediately after birth. They told her to walk about rather than lie down at this stage.[5]

To relieve discomfort, the women used herbs gathered earlier from the field and garden. Most families had a supply of medicinal and culinary herbs; husbands as well as wives might be involved in their preparation. When Nicholas Gilman of Exeter, New Hampshire, went into the woods to gather betony in May of 1740, he was consciously or unconsciously following the instructions of an English midwifery manual of the seventeenth century, which recommended picking the plant "in its prime, which is in May." Mary Gilman may have processed the herb which her husband gathered, crushing it, clarifying the juice, then making it into a syrup with double its weight of sugar. When she went into labor four months later, she was prepared.[6]

Remedies came from the barnyard as well as the forest. When Cotton Mather's wife was suffering in her last illness, she dreamed that a "grave person" appeared to her and told her that the pain in her breast could be relieved by cutting "the warm Wool from a living Sheep" and applying it "warm unto the grieved Pain." She confided the mystical remedy to her physician, who encouraged the family to try it.[7] The remedy, which so amazed Mistress Mather's husband was actually an ancient device for relieving labor pain.[8] It had probably existed in oral tradition long before it appeared either in an English medical treatise of the

seventeenth century or in Mrs. Mather's dream. She had perhaps heard it talked about, if not seen it used, at a long since forgotten birth.

There is symbolic fitness in the use of new laid eggs. They were not only served to the mother as food but soon after birth were applied externally, first having been stirred over hot embers in an earthen pipkin, then plastered on a dressing.[9] Most of the midwife's supplies were probably as ordinary. Matthew Patten purchased or borrowed butter immediately before each of his wife's deliveries. This may have been coincidental, but probably was not. Fresh butter, with less savory emollients like hog's grease, was used to lubricate the midwife's hands and to anoint the vagina and perineum to facilitate stretching during labor.[10] For the parturient woman there was comfort as well as reassurance in familiar things.

But an even more important source of aid came from the attendants themselves. Recent studies of the psychology of birth have shown the significance of emotional support during labor. An informed and empathetic coach is an effective analgesic in helping a woman surmount fear and pain.[11] In delivery, there was physical as well as emotional intimacy among the women. A mother might give birth held in another woman's lap or leaning against her attendants as she squatted on the low, open seated

"midwife's stool." [12] In cases of extreme difficulty, a draught of another mother's milk was considered a sure remedy. [13] The presence in the room of a lactating woman was useful for another reason as well. A friend or neighbor was probably the baby's first nurse, since the mother's own milk (or colostrum) was presumed impure for several days due to the "commotions" of birth. [14]

Because the attending women would watch the child grow to maturity, they also represented a kind of insurance that nothing would go wrong in delivery that might result in trouble after. If it did they would be around to testify. A whole collection of superstitions surrounded the handling of the umbilical cord. It must not touch the floor lest the child grow up unable to hold water. It must not be cut too short for a boy, lest he prove "insufficient in encounters with Venus," nor too long for a girl, lest she become immodest. [15] Delivery was characterized by a succession of gender-infused rituals.

Childbearing in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century New England was similar in some ways to the community-centered home birth of today. But it was also strikingly different. This was apparent not only in the exclusion of males and in the intimacy with the natural world, but in the attitude toward suffering. "Natural" birth in the premodern world was presumed to be both painful

and dangerous--as God intended.[16] It really doesn't matter that demographic studies for most communities in the region show no significant attrition for women during the years of childbearing, pious women like Anne Bradstreet of Andover or Sarah Goodhue of Ipswich wrote spiritual testaments as they faced childbirth just as men of the same class and time signed wills before embarking on a long sea journey or military expedition-[17]

A manuscript record kept by John Cotton of Hampton, New Hampshire and passed on to his son-in-law, Nathaniel Gookin, shows this theme in two generations of Anne Bradstreet's descendants. Anne Lake Cotton gave birth to nine children in the twenty years between September 1687 and January 1707. Although she lost her first baby two months before the birth of her second, the next five children survived infancy. Then in quick succession she lost three babies at or soon after delivery. The first of these three children was born on Tuesday, and died on Saturday before his expected christening on Sunday. "The name design'd was Samuel," his father wrote, "in remembrance of Gods hearing prayers for his mother, who was wonderfully delivered of him after 11 convulsion fits. . . God grant his Mercy herein may never be forgotten, tho Samuel be gone to the land of Forgetfulness!"[18]

Mrs. Cotton was apparently suffering from eclampsia, a severe form of toxemia characterized by dangerous elevation of blood pressure. With modern prenatal care, this condition seldom develops to the state of convulsions today, but should it do so, the danger is extreme. Although mothers have been known to recover after as many as 200 "fits," the prognosis for the infant is grim. Even in relatively recent times, perinatal mortality has been as high as forty-five percent.[19] Little Samuel's death is not surprising.

Such an event must have been traumatic, not only for the parents, but for the entire family. Dorothy, the oldest Cotton daughter, was ten years old when the first of three doomed siblings was born. When the last dead fetus was buried in the garden behind the house, she was thirteen. Just four years later she married Nathaniel Gookin and within nine months was delivered of her own first son. By any statistical standard her childbearing record was remarkable. In twenty-three years, she gave birth to thirteen children, losing only one premature baby at birth. But she must have carried into her childbearing years the memory of her mother's suffering. Ten of the twelve entries in her husband's handwriting record some variant of the proverbial "long and dangerous travail."

According to the family record, Dorothy Gookin experienced "exceeding hard & Dangerous Travail," "very long Travail," "very sharp (tho' not long) Travail," "hard Travail," "very hard Travail," and "very hard & dangerous travail." With her ninth child, she "fell in Travail and was under very Dangerous Circumstances But it pleased God [in] his Great Mercy to Spare her." Despite these recurrent crises, she outlived her husband, who died the very month their last child was born. The thirteenth entry is in the handwriting of their oldest son: "Saturday Aug. 10 1734 between 9 & 10 in the Morning after a long & dangerous travail My Mother was delivered of a son." [20]

In historical documents the nature of "travail" is almost always a subjective impression reported by women and recorded by men. Childbirth was not only an emblem of the suffering of Eve--it was a moment of supreme drama. One need not diminish in any way the actual suffering of some women to recognize that the expected pain and trial were also a source of attention and sympathy. In the drama of childbirth, husbands were twice removed from the scene. Their sex excluded them not only from direct participation but in a very real sense from active support. In the early stages, they ran errands, summoning the midwife and getting supplies, but at the height of the crisis their only real calling was to wait. This is apparent in the diary of

Nicholas Gilman of Exeter, New Hampshire, who recorded the events surrounding the birth of his fifth child in September of 1740.

After the Women had been Some time assembled I went out to get a little Eriony Water - Upon My return My Wives mother came to me with tears in her Eyes, O, says she, I dont know how it will fare with your poor wife, hinting withal her extreme danger.[21]

Not only the birth itself, but the husband's very awareness of the progress of the birth, were controlled by the women in the delivery room. The diary of Matthew Patten, a farmer of Bedford, New Hampshire, is much more matter-of-fact than Gilman's, yet even his laconic entries reveal a similar management of events. "My wife was Delivered Safe of a Daughter precisely at 12 o Clock at noon after abundance of hard Labor and a great deal of Discouragement and fear of Deficulatory," he wrote, adding, "My Wife and the Women were all a great Deal Discouraged." [22] Momentarily at least, childbirth reversed the position of the sexes, thrusting women into center stage, casting men in supporting roles.

Christ had likened his own death and resurrection to the sorrow and deliverance of a woman whose "time had come." [23] Travail, the curse visited by God upon the daughters of Eve, was not only an emblem of weakness and sin but a means of redemption. Joy permeated the birth record of Mary Cleaveland of Chebacco Parish in Ipswich, who

recorded the births of each child in her own shaky and unformed hand. "the Lord appeared for me and made me the living mother of another living Child," she wrote in October of 1751. For her the entry was formulaic. After the birth of her seventh child, she wrote "The Lord was better to me than my fears." [24] So he must have been to more than one woman in northern New England. Bolstered by scriptures and sustained by their sisters, they labored and overcame.

In no other experience in the premodern world were women so completely in control or so firmly bonded. But it would be a mistake to see early American childbirth as entirely independent of male authority. Two men--the minister and the physician--were at least potential intruders into this female milieu. By the end of the eighteenth century, medical involvement in childbirth would be common in cities, foretelling the "modernization" which would eventually banish the midwife. Before 1750, the authority of the women was secure, though there are telling glimpses of what would come in the activities of two northern New England ministers, men who combined scientific and religious authority.

The most dramatic example of ministerial interest in childbirth comes from the period just after the Antinomian controversy in Massachusetts. In the 1640's, when the two

chief female dissenters in the colony, Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer both gave birth to "monsters," ministers and public officials were quick to see the judging hand of God. Little wonder that a scientifically curious minister like John Fiske of Wenham would want to examine an "unnatural birth" reported to him. In 1647, in the presence of three women, he performed a partial autopsy on the body of a stillborn infant, a process which he carefully described in his journal, detailing the opening of the skull and the examination of the "brains, fibres, and blood." [25] He decided that the fetus was basically normal but had been damaged in birth. What had brought him to this home? The fears of the mother? The suspicions of the attending women? Or simply neighborhood gossip? In this case, the reason for his visit is less important than the authority which he carried. Learning--the formal book learning which was denied to women--brought him to the home of the mother. His role here was not to officiate at a birth but to interpret it.

Hugh Adams, physician and minister in Durham, New Hampshire three-quarters of a century later, went further. Adams, an eccentric who was eventually ousted from his parish, wrote a self-serving memoir after his dismissal, in which he claimed to have assisted at the birth of Mary Glitten's first child in December of 1724. According to

Adam's account, the woman had been in labor three and one-half days when the midwife, Madame Hilton, summoned him. He rode the seven miles to Exeter, carrying both medicine and the authority of Christ. He began with a prayer, pleading the promise of I Timothy "that the woman shall be saved in child bearing." He then gave her "some of the most strong Hysterick medicines to recall and quicken her labour pains; and Dilated the passage of nature with Unguentum Aperitivum meipsum." That failing, he cried unto Christ and then "proceeded by manual operation" to "move the Babe into a capable posture." Within a minute it was born. Having facilitated the child's first birth, Adams then officiated at its second, baptizing it with the name of Benjamin-[26]

It is ludicrous to think of the Reverend Mr. Adams, whose obstetrical knowledge consisted of reading a few English treatises, walking into the midwife's house in Exeter and working a medical miracle, especially one which involved complex manipulation of the fetus, a procedure hardly mastered without practice. There is no way of knowing exactly what happened, but it is clear from the minister's own account that he considered his efforts on behalf of Mrs. Glitten one with the other "remarkable providences" described in his memoir. These included calling down the vengeance of the Lord upon the Jesuit missionary, Father Rale, as well as protecting his own sons'

lives in battle by the ritual blowing of animal horns. Adams believed that melodious psalm singing (an eighteenth-century innovation opposed by conservatives) was a direct cause of the success of New Hampshire troops against the Indians! [27] It is difficult to know whether his mind set was that of an eighteenth-century man of science or a seventeenth-century wizard. According to his own account, Adams delivered one other baby. Although the mother survived, the child did not. [28]

Two deliveries hardly constitute an obstetrical practice, and we might dismiss Adams' story if it were not so instructive. His success in the case of Mary Glitten can probably be credited to the encouragement of English medical treatises, his own authority as a man of God, a remarkably inflated ego, and luck. But it is also a reminder of the power of the "learned man" in this society. In a moment of extreme peril, the traditional experience of the midwife gave way to the booklearning and professional aura of the minister-physician.

In the development of obstetrics in northern New England, Hugh Adams of Durham stands midway between a scientifically curious minister like John Fiske and a professional physician like Edward Augustus Holyoke of Salem, who by 1755 was regularly consulting in cases of "hard labor." [29] In the seventeenth century, English men of

medicine had become increasingly interested in midwifery. Hugh Adams and Madame Hilton were obviously aware of this tradition. Though some midwives strenuously resisted male intrusion, others consulted physicians in an emergency or summoned a surgeon to dismember a dead fetus which could not be expelled naturally. But the results were often grim. To be "delivered by a physician" frequently meant the death of the mother or child or both.[30]

The rapid development of forceps in the second half of the eighteenth century gave the physician a technological advantage he had not had before. Although the first forceps were only suitable for use on dead infants, later versions could be used successfully in live deliveries. By 1800 "male science" had diverged dramatically from "female tradition" and midwifery was under strenuous attack.[31] But the decline of the midwives cannot be attributed solely to the development of obstetrical science. It was also a consequence of the undermining of traditional social relations and the increasing privatization of the family.[32] Midwives were "experienced," whereas physicians were "learned." Because the base of the midwife's experience was shared by all women, their authority was communal as well as personal. In attacking the midwives, nineteenth-century physicians were attacking a system more than a profession. The very intensity of their disdain for

"old wife's tales" suggests the continuing authority of the women even in this period of dramatic change.[33]

The diary of Mary Holyoke, whose industrious housekeeping we surveyed in chapter four, gives some glimpses of childbearing customs in Augustus Holyoke's own family. Holyoke's long interest in obstetrics may have been stimulated by the death of his first wife in childbed. The recurring trauma of his second marriage was not "hard labor," however, but infant death. Mary Holyoke gave birth to twelve children in twenty-two years, only four of whom survived infancy. Her first little Polly lived four years, her second ten months, and her third, christened for her older sisters on the fifth of September 1767 died four days later. Five other infants died in the first weeks or months of life. One after another the "dear babies" came and went, while Mary continued to garden, write in her journal, sew cravats for the doctor, and take tea with friends.[34]

She summarized each delivery in the simple phrase, "brought to bed," seldom adding any other details. On September 12, 1771, she was "Brought to Bed quite alone 11 A.M. of a Daughter." Was she literally alone in her house, without the assistance of her husband, a maid, or a midwife? Or was she simply implying that no one from outside the family had arrived in time for the birth? For five of the twelve deliveries she did list the names of two or three

women who were with her. "Mrs. Jones" was present at four births, "Mrs. Mascarene" (who was Augustus' sister Peggy) at three, and "Mrs. Carwick" at two. No assemblage of the neighborhood is implied here, just an intimate circle of relatives and friends. There are two explicit references to her husband's ministrations near the time of birth. Three days before one baby arrived, "the Doctor" bled her. Two months after the birth of another, when she developed a breast infection, he lanced it. Medical assistance did not banish traditional comforts, however. When Mary developed a "knot" in her breast a few days after the birth of her ninth child, "Nurse anointed it with Parsley, wormwood & Camomel Stewed in Butter."

On February 20, 1763, Mary noted in her diary that her friend Mrs. Crowningshield had been "brought to bed of a daughter." Two days later, "Mrs. Vans" delivered and within a week "Lilla Roby." In urban Salem as elsewhere in New England, childbirth remained a central event in the community of women, yet here a formal "sitting up week" seems to have replaced the hasty gathering in the night still characteristic of rural neighborhoods. On March 3, Mary herself "kept chamber" and the next day was "Brought to bed of Peggy." Two weeks later, when she was ready to sit in a chair and chat, the visits began. On Sunday, one friend came, on Monday five, on Thursday two, and during the

following week eight more.[36] These women sipped tea and admired each other's gifts. Perhaps one of them brought Peggy a fancy pincushion stuck with her initials or the motto "Welcome Little Stranger"[37]

Mary Holyoke, like other women in New England, delivered her dozen babies at home, sometimes under the watchful care of her closest friends, but her diary suggests that for the wealthiest women in the region the circle of support had already begun to shrink as the intimate ritual of birth gave way to a more distant ceremony of welcome.

* * *

To understand the importance of "travail" in female life we must extend the image. For most women, life in the childbearing years was less firmly bound by the agricultural seasons than by personal seasons of pregnancy and lactation, twenty to thirty month cycles which stretched from the birth of one baby to the birth of the next. The "labor" of birth was preceded by the "labor" of pregnancy.

Twentieth century women would recognize some aspects of seventeenth-century prenatal care. Physicians in both centuries recommended moderation in diet, drinking, and exercise. Though cathartics and bleeding are foreign to contemporary women, reduction of salt intake is not. Nor is the suggestion that walking is better than prolonged sitting in the last months. Missing from premodern guides to

pregnancy was any reference to weight control, but there were remedies for other common problems. For swelling of feet and ankles, The Experienced Midwife offered a lotion of vinegar and rose water; for pressure pain it suggested an improvised and probably uncomfortable version of a maternity corset, swathing bands looped around the abdomen and tied at the neck. It had little to say about the most famous of female complaints--morning sickness--though it did note that nausea was a possible sign of pregnancy. A woman who followed such a guide would probably eat more milk and eggs than usual, but less salt meat, a practice which would prove helpful in curtailing the very problems Ann Cotton experienced. She would avoid "violent exercise" in the first month and heavy lifting in the last, but she would remain active, perhaps indulging herself at the end of a busy day with a dish of roasted figs and a belly rub.[38]

Court records reinforce the impression that daily life continued with little interruption for pregnancy. At the same time, they make it clear that pregnant women were endowed with a special status entitling them to deference and protection. The case of Sarah Bcynton of Haverhill is instructive. She was probably in her fourth month when Ebenezer Browne came to her yard looking for an ox which her husband had locked up. Sarah ordered Browne off their ground, telling him "if you will come, you must take what

comes, for I will do what I can to hinder you." Browne retorted "If you were a man as you are a woman I would stave out your braines." Not to be intimidated she thrust a ladder against the door of the hovel where the animal was kept. When Browne grabbed it and threw it down, the uppermost rung struck her.[39]

In March, Sarah Boynton's husband successfully sued for damages, claiming that his wife, being pregnant, had suffered great pain from her injuries, had been unable to do her work for twenty-six weeks, and had required expensive advice from midwives. Sarah Boynton felt it her duty to defend her husband's right to the ox, her pregnancy notwithstanding, yet her frailness became a key point of the damage claim in court. Ebenezer Browne knew he should not strike a woman, yet he did. His taunt, "if you were a man as you are a woman," implied she had stepped beyond the bounds which he would tolerate in a male, as though in abandoning feminine weakness she had invited attack. The court, in this case, did not agree.

But what were the limits of male protectiveness? And what was the responsibility of the woman herself for her own health and that of her child? Margaret Prince of Gloucester said she "was a lusty as any woman in town" before William Browne began to trouble her, dropping veiled threats, calling her "one of Goodwife Jackson's imps" and warning her

that the formal complaint she had lodged in court would be the dearest day's work she ever made. She had a difficult delivery and her child was stillborn. In her mind the case was clear. Browne was responsible for the death of her child.[40] She probably implied witchcraft, though not necessarily. Midwifery manuals warned newly pregnant women to avoid all unusual worries and anxieties for the good of the child.[41] In attacking the psychological health of the mother, Browne attacked the baby.

Yet two neighbors, Goody and Goodman Kettle, argued in Browne's defense that there were much more obvious reasons for Margaret Prince's troubles. Not three weeks before her travail, they had seen her carrying clay to her house in a bucket on her head. What is more, she had "reached up over the door to daub with clay." [42] They were undoubtedly referring to a folk belief (still held by some women in the middle of twentieth century) that reaching over one's head in the last months of pregnancy would result in a tangled umbilical cord and the possible death of the child. Goody Kettle said that she had walked home with her neighbor and told her "she did wrong in carrying clay at such a time, but Goody Prince replied that she had to, her husband would not, and her house lay open. She had carried three pails and had three more to carry." [43]

Here was a woman caught between two imperatives--to preserve the safety of her child and to finish her house. Perhaps her behavior was a kind of demonstration of desperation, an appeal for help. She apparently got none. Goody Kettle could offer advice, but without ignoring her own precepts she could not offer physical assistance. She herself was pregnant.[44] Angry at her husband, Margaret Prince violated folk wisdom, then turned her anguish at the loss of her child toward William Browne, a troublesome and disrespectful neighbor. Her husband, perhaps experiencing some guilt of his own, concurred in the accusation.

Because such cases are isolated, they admit only tentative impressions. Yet the kind of conflict Goody Prince exemplifies may have been frequent among women of ordinary status and small means. Folk prescriptions on lifting may have helped to curb what might have become a dangerous work load in this labor-poor society. A woman in early New England could afford to be pampered only in proportion to the number of other persons available to do her work. Even for a relatively wealthy woman, relatives and servants often proved as much an added burden as a help. This is abundantly illustrated in the diary of Nicholas Gilman of Exeter, which records in some detail the events in the family during the last five months of Mary Gilman's fifth pregnancy.

Though the total number of persons living in the household in the spring and summer of 1740 is uncertain, they did include four children, ranging in age from eighteen months to eight years. Mary's mother lived with them as did a teen-aged cousin Mary Little. Nicholas's parents and unmarried sisters lived nearby. Despite all this potential help, however, it is doubtful if Mary Gilman had much time to contemplate her state. One after the other over a two month period all four children contracted measles, followed by Molly Little herself. Meanwhile, Mary's mother was called away to Newbury to the bedside of a dying father, and Nicholas's mother was totally absorbed in nursing one daughter who was dying and another who was chronically ill. Mary herself took a turn watching with them at night. Meanwhile, Nicholas was absorbed with his own spiritual and professional problems. Between bouts of headache and toothache he prepared sermons, spending two to three days a week in his new pastorate of Durham, fifteen miles away. Except for one brief entry, noting that Mary herself had broken out with rash, he never mentions her health in the diary. The first evidence of her pregnancy is the announcement of the birth of a son in September.[45]

Pregnancy may have been as uneventful in life as in the
s of eighteenth-century diaries. It is important to
remember, however, that diaries reflect the viewpoint of

husbands. Women in pregnancy, as in birth, were supported by a silent sisterhood of mothers, sisters, cousins, and servants. We can only glimpse the routines, shared anxieties, and supporting female lore which characterized the "nine months travail" which preceded the birth of each child.

* * *

In some societies, breastfeeding begins at delivery, sometimes even before the umbilical cord is cut.[46] New England mothers probably began nursing their babies three or four days later when the colorless colostrum had been replaced by milk. The first feeding was occasionally recorded in eighteenth-century diaries, especially if there was any anxiety over the survival of the child. Though Benjamin Lynde of Salem had no particular reason to fear for the life of his first grandchild, he wrote in January of 1733, four days after her birth, "Daughter begins to suckle her little Molly; God make her a good nurse." Lynde reflected an attitude shared by other New Englanders--nursing one's own children was both a blessing and a duty-[47]

An ordinary woman had no choice, of course, since the only alternative was to hire another mother to do it for her. Mary Lynde could have afforded a wet nurse, but she apparently chose not to. In January of 1733, when another

of her children was eight months old, her husband noted in his diary, "My wife ill of a slow fever. God was pleased to mitigate the illness, but she continued weak for some time, and could not suckle her infant." [48] The past tense in the entry makes it difficult to tell exactly when Mary became ill. Perhaps the child was old enough to survive on pap; perhaps it was necessary to hire a nurse. The important point for her husband, however, was that illness, not presumably a desire for freedom, ended suckling.

Puritan writers of both sexes praised maternal breastfeeding. In 1622 an English noblewoman named Elizabeth Knyvet, who regretted having entrusted her own eighteen children to wet nurses, published a tract entitled The Countess of Lincoln's Nurserie. This tract would have been known to at least one New England family, for Thomas Dudley (governor of Massachusetts and father of Anne Bradstreet) was steward to the author's son. "Go then Great booke of Nursing plead the Cause./ Teach High'st low'st, all, it's Gods and Natures lawes," pleaded an introductory poem written by Elizabethan physician Thomas Lodge. [49] His reference to social classes is important here, for breastfeeding, which had always been essential to the "lowest" had seldom been entranced by the "highest" among English women. The Puritan countess was an exception, in precept if not in practice. [50]

James Axtell has concluded that wet nursing was not common in the earliest years in New England, but that in the eighteenth century "the urban aristocracy may have resorted to wet-nurses on a somewhat larger scale." [51] The first conclusion seems reasonable, for economic as well as for religious reasons. The second conclusion is difficult to evaluate. Newspaper advertisements for "a good breast of milk" certainly show that wet-nursing existed in eighteenth-century Boston, but they do not show why and under what circumstances a nurse might have been employed. In any society which relies upon human milk for infant feeding, a certain amount of wet-nursing is inevitable, given the possibility of inadequate lactation or the illness or death of the mother. Advertisements by 27 women in 13 years does not indicate a widespread practice. On the other hand, newspaper references may obscure a larger phenomenon if nurses were so widely available that most mothers had no need to rely on the public prints to secure their services. For the mid-eighteenth-century urban aristocracy, the question remains moot.

But for most of New England, we can safely conclude that maternal breastfeeding was the norm. Scattered references suggest that mothers nursed in public as well as in private, sitting on the ground outside the village church, as well as at home in their own beds--with or

without the presence of visitors.[52] Little girls grew up expecting to nurse babies. Young mothers learned by observation as well as by explicit instruction how to deal with cracked nipples, sleepy infants, and insistent toddlers. They probably also learned a medley of techniques lost to their more fastidious descendants, including the use of puppies to relieve engorged breasts. At some point they discovered that suckling "suppressed the terms." [53] Whether or not they consciously relied upon this ancient method of contraception, they found the economy in this natural rhythm. When weaning is explicitly mentioned in historical documents it precedes or immediately follows the beginning of a succeeding pregnancy.

* * *

Each stage in the reproductive cycle was distinct, marked not only by discrete tasks but by recurring rituals. This becomes apparent if we look more closely at the reproductive cycles of three eighteenth century women as reflected in their husband's diaries. Although male diarists seldom wrote about their wives, they did consistently record those female activities which disrupted or affected their own. Simply by correlating the two events most consistently mentioned--births and overnight journeys--one can derive circumstantial, though impressive, evidence of the personal meaning of fertility.

The diaries of Zaccheus Collins, Matthew Patten, and Joseph Green cover large portions of the years of childbearing for each of their wives--fifteen out of seventeen years for Mrs. Green, eighteen out of twenty-one years for Mrs. Patten, and twenty out of twenty-two years for Mrs. Collins.[54] It is coincidental, but nevertheless appropriate that all three women were named "Elizabeth," for the mother of John the Baptist was considered a model of righteous childbearing.[55] Elizabeth Collins and Elizabeth Green each gave birth to eleven children. Elizabeth Green was expecting her ninth child at the time of her husband's death. Mrs. Green had one stillborn child and Mrs. Collins lost her first baby at one year, but all of the other children survived infancy. Thus, the three families were not only prolific but unusually healthy, exemplifying premodern reproductive patterns in an almost ideal form, with birth intervals averaging 22, 23, and 25 months.

The three husbands contrast in education, occupation, religion, and geographic location, yet all three were vigorous and active leaders in their communities. The diary of Joseph Green begins in 1700, soon after his call to the ministry in Salem Village, now Danvers, Massachusetts. That of Zaccheus Collins, a Quaker farmer of Lynn, Massachusetts, opens in 1725, while that of Matthew Patten, a founder of the Scotch-Irish community of Bedford, New Hampshire, begins

in 1754. All three men were frequently away from home. Matthew Patten spent many days in the New Hampshire woods surveying new townships or in Boston or Portsmouth carrying goods to market or attending court. In addition to his agricultural and commercial enterprises, Zaccheus Collins was active in Quaker meetings, which regularly called him to Rhode Island and New Hampshire as well as Boston. Joseph Green frequently traveled to Boston or to neighboring towns to attend lectures or to keep a fast.

In comparison, all three wives led sheltered and narrow lives, though each traveled--in her own way and according to her own seasons. As might be expected, Elizabeth Collins, the Quaker, traveled most frequently, sometimes accompanying itinerant Friends who were passing through Lynn on their way to nearby meetings. Mrs. Patten, who lived in an isolated and, in its early stages, frontier community, traveled least. Yet the journeys of all three women fall into a remarkably consistent pattern when keyed to their reproductive histories.

For purposes of analysis the overnight journeys of the three wives can be divided into three periods: a period of "Pregnancy", beginning 280 days before the birth of each child, a period of "Infancy," from birth to ten months; and an "Interim" period, a variable span from ten months after the birth of the last child to 280 days before the birth of

the next. (See Table I.) For all three women the greatest frequency of travel was in the so-called "Interim" period, and for two of the three women, "Infancy" was clearly a more serious restraint than "Pregnancy." What do these rather limited facts tell us about the lives of the three women?

We might begin by looking at each of the travel patterns in greater detail. It is hardly surprising, for example, that pregnancy might restrain travel. What is surprising, perhaps, is the number of times all three women undertook journeys in the advanced stages of pregnancy. In fact, the most adventuresome trip Elizabeth Patten ever took was during the fifth month of her tenth pregnancy when she went by horseback alone the more than eighty miles to Boston to sell cloth and thread. Matthew, who was usually responsible for such ventures, was heavily involved in harvesting at the time.[50] Elizabeth Collins took a number of journeys early in the sixth month of pregnancy. In March of 1731 she spent almost two weeks in Haverhill and Newbury, presumably visiting relatives. In April of 1741, Zaccheus took her and her sister-in-law to Boston, returning for them three days later.[59] Elizabeth Green completed two journeys in the seventh month, both of them to nearby Wenham, where her parents lived. The diary entry for June 8, 1710, is quite explicit about the fact that on this occasion she shared a neighbor's horse with her husband.[58]

All three women, however, remained close to their homes during the last two months of each pregnancy. This seems to have been true even when unusual circumstances might have impelled them to travel. Late in September of 1755, Elizabeth Patten remained in Bedford while her husband attended her own father's funeral in nearby Londonderry. She was just one month away from the delivery of her fourth child.[59] Pregnancy may have been a "nine month sickness" as the midwifery manual said, but these three women were rather slow to succumb.

A more dramatic restraint is apparent in the next period--the first ten months of each baby's life. This is probably related to lactation, which in many ways placed more demands on the mother than pregnancy. Although a woman might leave her infant for short while, perhaps relying for an occasional feeding upon a neighbor who was also nursing, she could not travel far or long without taking the child with her. Mrs. Green and Mrs. Patten occasionally traveled with infants (James Patten was baptized in Londonderry, New Hampshire, at the age of seven months while his parents were visiting there.).[60] But all three mothers avoided traveling during the third quarter of their child's first year. One reason is obvious. Compared with a newborn infant, a seven or eight month old baby is simply not very portable, being both heavier and more active. If he or she

Table VII:1

Incidence of Travel During Pregnancy and Lactation[*]

Table VII:1

	Pregnancy	Infancy	Interim	All
Elizabeth Collins	.185	.044	.229	.142
Elizabeth Green	.105	.016	.225	.102
Elizabeth Patten	.11	.071	.266	.129

* I arrived at the numerical index by dividing the total number of overnight journeys by the total number of months in each stage.

were still dependent upon mother's milk, the only practical solution was to stay home.

But for all three women the most significant pattern may not be the restraint on travel during infancy so much as the sudden jump in activity after the tenth month of each baby's life. For Elizabeth Collins this is especially dramatic. For six of the nine babies mentioned in the diary, her first journey after birth was between ten and fifteen months. For the other three, the second journey fell into this same crucial period. A similar pattern is discernible for Mrs. Green. Were these journeys either a celebration of or even a method of weaning? The latter possibility is confirmed in Joseph Green's diary entry for April of 1702. Green took his wife to her parents' home in Wenham, then "came home to wean John," who was then seventeen months old.[61]

There is supporting evidence in less detailed diaries of the period for the idea of the "weaning journey." From January 1740, when Nicholas Gilman began his daily diary, until late in August of 1741, his wife Mary apparently never left Exeter, New Hampshire, where they lived. This period included the last eight months of her fifth pregnancy and the first year of their son Josiah's life. But just before Josiah's first birthday she took an unexplained three-day journey alone to her grandmother's home in Newbury,

Massachusetts.[62] There is a similar example in the almanac diary of Edward Holyoke of Salem. In January of 1730, his wife made a two-week visit to her parents' home in Ipswich. Their child was then sixteen months old.[63] For Mary Gilman and Margaret Holyoke, absence from home in the second year of a child's life might have meant weaning, but it might have also have represented a vacation, an unexpected opportunity to rest from family responsibilities during the short interim period before the onset of another pregnancy.

It is easier to describe these behavior patterns than to interpret them. Did maternal absence in the second year of life mean abrupt and traumatic weaning? Was it a manifestation of a repressive and potentially pathological approach to child care? Some historians might argue that it was. Noting the pervasiveness of oral themes and anxieties in the historical record of New England witchcraft, John Demos has speculated that "many New England children were faced with some unspecified but extremely difficult psychic tasks in the first year or so of life." [64] James Axtell has pointed to the metaphor of weaning in Puritan literature. "I became as a weaned child," John Winthrop wrote of his conversion. "I knew I was worthy of nothing for I knew I could do nothing for him or for my self." [65] Certainly the sudden disappearance not only of the breast but of the mother herself might present severe difficulties for the

infant.

Yet the Winthrop quotation cuts in two directions. It documents the child's sense of loss, but it does so from the parent's point of view. Discounting the unlikely possibility that John Winthrop remembered his own weaning, he was describing the feelings of the child as he perceived them from the outside. The situation he described may indeed document parental harshness, but the description of the situation suggests considerable empathy. Winthrop did not focus upon the behavior of the child, its crying or its demands for its mother, but upon his perception of its interior state, its feeling of helplessness.

Now the really crucial problem for our purposes is the response of parents to this perceived state. How can parents who understand and sympathize with a child's need deliberately deny it? As the scripture says, "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" Setting aside for the moment unconscious motives, we can say that loving parents will deny a child's need for only two reasons--either they lack the ability to satisfy it or they believe that denial will result in longterm good. In the crisis of weaning, mothers and fathers were obviously in quite different positions because one could supply the demand, one could not. Assuming that in colonial America both parents believed that rather sudden weaning was for the

ultimate benefit of the child, the withdrawal of the mother made perfectly good sense.

This would be especially so if the parent who could supply the need might be tempted to do so. In the words of an eighteenth-century Maine minister, the converted Christian learned that Christ was "as willing to feed him with his Flesh and Blood; as ever Tender Mother was to draw out her full & aking Breast to her hungry, crying child." [66] Abrupt or sudden weaning would be as painful for the mother as it was difficult for the child. The discomfort would be both physical and psychological, as the mother thwarted both the impulse to relieve her breasts and the desire to nurture her crying child. This denial of the maternal role might well have reduced her to the state of psychic helplessness characteristic of a weaned child. Hence her own trip home to mother.

The facts fit together neatly, rather too neatly perhaps. Although there is circumstantial evidence for a more widespread practice, there is only one fully documented example of a "weaning journey" in the diaries under investigation, that of Elizabeth Green who remained at her parents' home in Wenham in the spring of 1702 while her husband returned home to wean sixteen-month-old John. Even this event can have more than one interpretation. On the one hand, the mother's journey can be seen as a drastic

measure, an abrupt and psychologically disturbing end to infancy. On the other hand, at sixteen months, little John might already have shown clear independence and a loss of interest in the breast. Nursing may have been confined to one or two brief feedings, perhaps at night or in the early morning when it was easier for the mother to bring him to bed than get up and prepare other food. The journey of the mother might simply have been the ritual termination of an already waning stage, an experience made more pleasant for both mother and child by the active interest and involvement of the father.

Yet disturbing questions remain. If the stage of weaning was not marked with anxiety and potential conflict, why did the mother find it necessary to leave? Was she in fact acting counter to her own instincts? Did Joseph Green's diary entry mark the eventual triumph of a husband over the prolonged, and to him perhaps disturbing, intimacy of mother and child? Or was it that Mrs. Green simply did not trust her own resolve? Did she believe herself incapable of surmounting that "softness," that excessiveness of maternal affection so mistrusted by Puritan writers? Was her dependence on John perhaps an even greater issue than his dependence on her? Little matter, perhaps, for within a few months there would be another infant in the house and the whole cycle would begin again.

* * *

Pregnancy, birth, lactation--these three stages in the female reproductive cycle established the parameters of life in the childbearing years. One need not exaggerate their importance nor describe women in bondage to the curse of Eve to recognize that these personal seasons might shape the smallest details of daily life--when to lift a heavy wash kettle or daub the chinks of a house, how far to go from home in quest of butter or yarn, whether to travel to Newbury meeting, mount a neighbor's horse for a trip to Boston, or stay at home and brew beer. Each cycle of reproduction was marked by epicycles, recurring patterns of restraint and release, pain and deliverance, sorrow and celebration. All of these were summarized in the word travail, a term which connoted not simply pain but effort, especially strenuous or self-sacrificing effort.

"O my children all, which in pains and care have cost me dear," Sarah Goodhue began a long passage of advice to her offspring. In The Four Ages Of Man, Anne Bradstreet put a more detailed description of maternal effort into the mouth of a child.

With tears into the world I did arrive,
My mother still did waste as I did thrive,
Who yet with love and all alacrity,
Spending, was willing to be spent for me.
With wayward cries I did disturb her rest,
Who sought still to appease me with breast:
With weary arms she danc'd and By By sung,
When wretched I ingrate had done the wrong-[67]

Eve's badge of sorrow might reinforce cultural notions of the weakness or vulnerability of women, but it might also become an instrument of female power. Suffering in childbirth could arouse the sympathy and protective instincts of husbands, but, even more profoundly perhaps, the prolonged sacrifices of pregnancy, birth, and lactation might convince religious children of their mother's claims upon them.

In 1701, Samuel Sewall of Boston stood in tearful elegy beside the grave of his mother, one of the first settlers of Newbury, Massachusetts. "My honoured and beloved Friends and Neighbours!" he exclaimed, "My dear Mother never thought much of doing the most frequent and homely offices of Love for me; and lavish'd away many Thousands of Words upon me, before I could return one word in Answer." [68] Sewall spoke of her piety and her industry, but the focus of emotion for this grown man was clearly his own infancy. Spending herself in childbearing, Mistress Sewall had earned the devotion of her son. Whatever the objective meaning of pregnancy, birth, and lactation in the lives of individual women, the notion of "travail" was central to the idea of motherhood as it was interpreted and presented in early New England.

1. Although there are abundant references to "childbed linen" in colonial documents, it is not at all clear what this included. Susan Swan, the curator of textiles at the Winterthur Museum, believes it encompassed a variety of things, perhaps swaddling bands, caps, baby sheets, and blankets. (letter to author, 2 August 1979) I wonder if it might not also have included sheets for the mother's bed or pallet. (If it was only for the infant, why not "children's linen" or "infant's linen" rather than "childbed linen?") The ceremonial function is implied not only in the separate designation but also in the value attached to this linen. Joannah Smith grouped "very good childbed linen" with "silk gowns, petticoats, costly laces, and turkey work" in describing the wealth in the Cogswell house; Essex Files, VI, 156. Samuel Plummer bought a parcel of childbed linen, two pillow beers and a pillow from Mr. Richard Lowell for five pounds and paid interest on it for some years; Essex Files, IV, 379-380. See also, Julia Cherry Spruill, Women's Life & Work in the Southern Colonies, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972, 1938), pp. 50, 325.
2. "The Experienced Midwife," in The Works of Aristotle (Philadelphia, 1798), p. 33. The "Aristotle" works were not of course written by the Greek but by an anonymous author or group of authors in seventeenth-century England. They went through many editions both in England and America. See Otho T. Beall, Jr., "Aristotle's Master Piece in America; A Landmark in the Folklore of Medicine," William & Mary Quarterly, 3d. Ser. XX (1963), 207-223. For the antiquity of some of "Aristotle's" lore, see Thomas Rogers Forbes, The Midwife and the Witch, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 36-38.
3. Diary of Zaccheus Collins, volume I, 1726-1750, MS, Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts; The Diary of Matthew Patten of Bedford, N.H. (Concord, N.H., 1903) p. 206-207; Essex Files, II, p. 36-38; Journals of the Rev. Thomas Smith and the Rev. Samuel Deane, ed. William Willis, (Portland: Joseph S. Bailey, 1849), p. 22-23. For the size of Falmouth, see p. 10.
4. Although an English physician, Grantly Dick-Read first challenged modern anesthetized childbirth, the most profound changes in American delivery practice followed the introduction of the "Lamaze Method" of

"psychoprophylaxis" developed at the Metal Workers' Hospital in Paris. As described in Elizabeth Bing, Six Practical Lessons for an Easier Childbirth, (New York, 1967) it emphasizes the active involvement of the father. More radical changes have appeared since 1970 and are well represented in Suzanne Arms, Immaculate Deception: A New Look at Women and Childbirth in America, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975). For a superb account of how these changes translate into actual practice in America, see Constance A. Bean, Labor & Delivery: An Observer's Diary, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1977). Chapters six and seven describe home birth.

5. For the importance of refreshments in theory, see John Oliver A Present For Teeming American Women (Boston, 1694), p. 3 and in practice Essex Files, V, 267. "The Experienced Midwife," pp. 36, 45, 62, has recommendations for the mother's food.
6. "The Diary of Nicholas Gilman," ed. William Kidder, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of New Hampshire, 1967, pp. 115, 134.
7. Diary of Cotton Mather, MHS Col. Seventh Series, VII, 444-445.
8. see Irving S. Cutter and Henry R. Viets, A Short History of Midwifery (Philadelphia and London: W.B. Saunders, 1964), p. 9 for the reference to Riverius, The Practice of Physick. The warm sheepskin was thought not only to relieve pain but to keep the woman's skin from wrinkling.
9. "The Experienced Midwife," p. 61.
10. Patten Diary e.g. pp. 64, 91, 120, 146; "Experienced Midwife," pp. 36, 40, 46.
11. The Lamaze method is based on this idea. For an intriguing description of labor "coaching," see Bean, Labor & Delivery, chapter two.

12. Catherine M. Scholten, "On the Importance of the Obstetrick Art": Changing Customs of Childbirth in America, 1760 to 1825, " William & Mary Quarterly, 3d Series, XXXIV, 433. Other delivery positions included kneeling on a pallet and standing with the support of two other women.
13. "The Experienced Midwife," p. 38.
14. "The Experienced Midwife," p. 65 for the theory; Samuel Sewall's Diary, I, 41, for the practice in New England.
15. Superstitions relating to the umbilical cord are in "The Experienced Midwife," pp. 43-44.
16. "The Experienced Midwife," p. 51, Cotton Mather, Elizabeth In Her Holy Retirement (Boston, 1710), p. 2.
17. "Before the Birth of One of Her Children," in Anne Bradstreet, Works, ed. Ellis, p. 395; Sarah Goodhue, "A Valedictory and Monitory Writing," in Thomas F. Waters, Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1633-1700, (Ipswich, Mass, 1905), pp. 519-524.
18. Reverend Seaborn Cotton Commonplace Book, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Massachusetts, pp. 177-188.
19. Nicholson J. Eastman and Louis M. Hellman, Williams Obstetrics, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966), pp. 702, 724-245.
20. Seaborn Cotton, p. 183-188.
21. Nicholas Gilman Diary, p. 134.
22. Matthew Patten, p. 253.

23. John 16:21-22.

24. Diary of Mary Greenland Cleaveland (1742-1762) in Cleaveland Family Papers, MS, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

25. Robert G. Pope, ed. The Notebook of the Reverend John Fiske, 1644-1675, Col. Soc. Mass. Collections (Boston, 1974) pp. 49-50; Mary Maples Dunn, "Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women In The Early Colonial Period," American Quarterly, pp. 588-589. In 1683, Joshua Moody, minister at Portsmouth, told Increase Mather about a "monstrous birth" to the wife of William Plaisted of Kittery. Like other personal tragedies this seems to have been interpreted as a warning to the community not to the individual. Moody told Mather, "A sober woman that told mee of it sd, wn I have told you the thing, you will say you have seen it already in the Times, every thing out of order," Col. Mass. Hist. Soc., Fourth Series, VIII (1868), pp. 361-362.

26. Hugh Adams, A Narrative of Remarkable Instance Of A Particular Faith, And Answers of Prayers. . . Recollected by Him. . . at his spare hours from December 7, 1724, to March 27, 1725, MS, Massachusetts Historical Society, p. 36.

27. Adams, Narrative, pp. 33, 5, 2, 3-4.

28. Adams, Narrative, p. 38.

29. Holyoke's almanac diaries are at the Essex Institute. He listed the ailment which he treated, though not the names of the patients. "Hard labor" appears four times between June 25 and December 19, 1756, a typical account for the period. Later in life he described his experiments with forceps in a letter to James Jackson, 14 January 1800, in James Jackson Manuscripts, MS, Massachusetts Historical Society.

30. "The Experienced Midwife" advocated calling a physician in an emergency, p. 39. There are references to emergency deliveries by physicians in The Diaries of

Benjamin Lynde and Benjamin Lynde, Jr., (Boston: 1880), p. 165 (this in 1745) and in Saltonstall Papers, I.

31. Cutter and Viets describe the development of forceps, which is also detailed in Williams Obstetrics, pp. 1077-1079. A brief but insightful survey of colonial obstetrics can be found in Judy Barrett Litoff, American Midwives 1860 to the Present, (Westport, Connecticut and London, England, Greenwood Press: 1978) pp. 7-14. Edward Holyoke learned about English developments through correspondence. William Shippen, Jr. of Philadelphia was the most prominent of a group of physicians who trained at the University of Edinburgh. He began pioneering lectures on midwifery in 1765 in Philadelphia.

32. Scholten, pp. 444-445.

33. Claire Elizabeth Fox, "Pregnancy, Childbirth and Early Infancy In Anglo-American Culture: 1675-1830," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1966, e.g. pp. 240-245.

34. Mary does not allow emotion to intrude into the tightly compressed entries on these deaths. A few days after Edwards' birth she simply wrote, "The Baby taken with fits the same as the others"; two days later she noted that an autopsy had been performed and the "disorder" found to be in the bowels; and two days after she said simply, "My dear Baby buried." The Holyoke Diaries, ed. George Francis Dow, (Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1911), pp. xvi, 73.

35. Holyoke Diaries, pp. 77, 70, 73, 81, 95, 107, 73, 77, 81.

36. Holyoke Diaries, p. 58, for a typical sequence.

37. Susan Swan, Plain & Fancy: American Women and Their Needlework, 1700-1850, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1976), p. 123. The Essex Institute, Salem, Mass. owns several eighteenth-century pincushions of this type.

38. "The Experienced Midwife," pp. 21-26.
39. Essex files, VII, 278.
40. Essex Files, II, 36-38.
41. "The Experienced Midwife," p. 21; Mather, Elizabeth In Her Holy Retirement, p. 21.
42. Essex Files, II, 38.
43. Essex Files, II, 38.
44. Vital Records of Gloucester, (Topsfield Historical Society, 1917), p. 395.
45. Gilman Diary, pp. 79-135.
46. Bean, Labor & Delivery, p. 89.
47. Lynde Diary, p. 36.
48. Lynde Diary, p. 163.
49. Elizabeth Wade White, Anne Bradstreet, "The Tenth Muse," (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) - p. 54.
50. Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800, (London: Harper & Row, 1977), pp.
51. James Axtell, The Schoolhouse On the Hill, p. 82. A typical ad in New England Weekly Journal, July 17, 1727.

52. e.g. Essex Files, III, 46 and Winthrop Papers, III, 104.

53. Samuel X. Radbill, "The Role of Animals in Infant Feeding," in Wayland D. Hand, ed. American Folk Medicine: a Symposium, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976); "The Experienced Midwife,"; p. 96.

54. To arrive at the overall childbearing history for each woman I supplemented the diaries with vital records. For Elizabeth Collins, Vital Records of Lynn, Massachusetts To the End of the Year 1849, (Salem, Mass: The Essex Institute, 1905) I, 114, 117, 119; II, 105, 463, 461. For Elizabeth Patten, History of Bedford, New Hampshire From 1737, (Concord: 1903) pp. 694-698. Joseph Green kept birth records and his diary in separate volumes. The genealogical information has been printed, "Joseph Green His Book," Pub. Col. Sci. Mass, XXXIV (1943) pp. 197-253. The diary itself is printed in Essex Institute Historical Collections, VII (1866) pp. 215-224; X (1869) pp. 73-104; and XXXVI (1900), pp. 325-330.

55. Cotton Mather, "Elizabeth In Her Holy Retirement."

56. Patten Diary, p. 200.

57. Zaccheus Collins, unpagged diary.

58. "Joseph Green Diary," EIHC, X, 86.

59. Patten Diary, p. 20-21.

60. Patten Diary, p. 28.

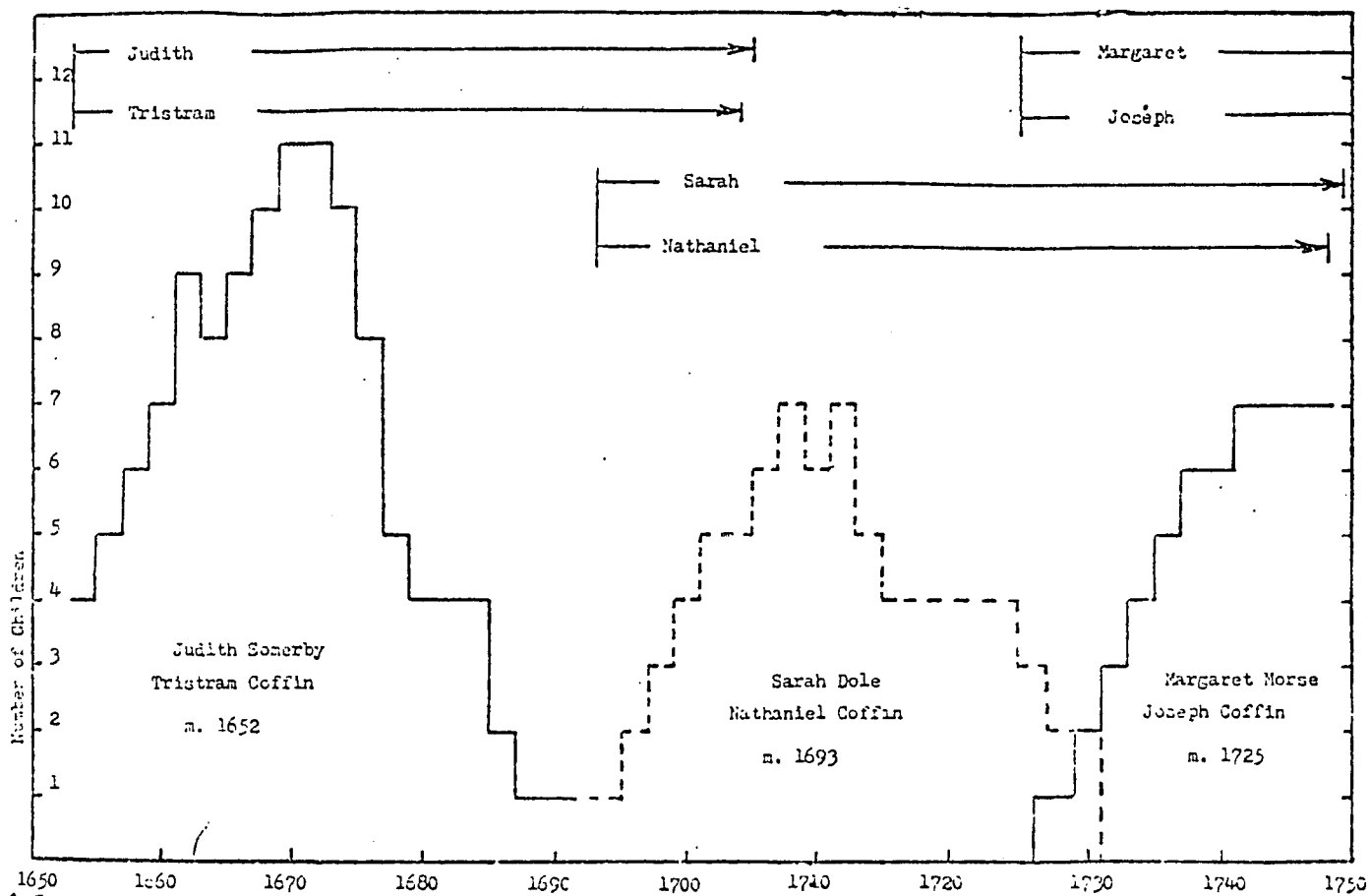
61. "Joseph Green Diary," EIHC, VIII, 222.

62. "Gilman Diary," p. 219-220.

63. The Holyoke Diaries, 1709-1856, ed. George Francis Dow, (Salem, Mass: Essex Institute, 1911), p. 3.
64. John Demos, "Underlying Themes in the Witchcraft of Seventeenth-Century New England," in Stanley N. Katz, ed., Essays in Politics and Social Development: Colonial America, (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1971), p. 132.
65. Axtell, School, p. 88.
66. Samuel Moody, The Children of the Covenant Under the Promise of Divine Teachings, (Boston, 1716), p. 34.
67. Bradstreet, Works, p. 152.
68. Sewall, DIARY, I, 444.

VIII:1

Maximum Number of Dependent Children in the Coffin House, Newbury
1650-1750



In computing the maximum number of children at home I used birth, death, marriage, and in a few cases college entrance dates. Obviously some children may have left earlier for apprenticeship or other reasons. The inhabitants of the house might also have included servants.

Chapter Eight
Mother of All Living

Perhaps there is no significance to the fact that Judith Coffin's monument in the old Newbury burying ground is twice as large as her husband's. Nevertheless, it may represent some measure of earthly justice meted out by her descendants. In life, Tristram had been honored among men. His epitaph highlights a title and a position:

To the memcry of Tristram Coffin, Esq., who hav-
ing served the first church of Newbury in the
office of a Deacon 20 years died Feb. 4, 1703-4
aged 72 years.

On earth her purchased a good degree,
Great boldness in the faith and liberty,
And now possesses immortality.

Judith's eminence had been private. Her epitaph celebrates her sobriety and her piety but above all her amazing fecundity:

To the memory of Mrs. Judith late virtuous wife
of Deac. Tristram Coffin, Esqr. who having lived
to see 177 of her children and children's children
to the 3d generation died Dec. 15, 1705 aged 80.

Grave, sober, faithful, fruitfull vine was she,
A rare example of true piety.
Widow'd awhile she wayted wisht for rest
With her dear husband in her Savior's breast.[1]

The key metaphor in Tristram's verse is economic--"he purchased a good degree." In Judith's it is organic--a "fruitful vine was she." Property versus reproduction--the

two markers etch traditional gender distinctions, but with the order of eminence curiously reversed! Consciously or unconsciously, the Coffin descendants elevated progeny above position, placing one-hundred-seventy-seven offspring before twenty years of service to a country church. Still, though Judith's stone towers over Tristram's, there is no explicit concern for balancing a scale. In honoring the wife, the eulogist quietly but unmistakably honored the husband as well. Judith Coffin lived and died the "virtuous wife of Deac. Tristram Coffin, Esqr."; in widowhood she "wisht for rest/ with her dear husband in her Saviour's breast." Perhaps the monument did not celebrate a woman so much as it celebrated a concept of family that had not yet become the exclusive preserve of women.

For many New Englanders--male as well as female--the values celebrated on Judith Coffin's stone were ascendant. She and Tristram inherited the ancient blessing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, living to see their own seed multiply as the stars. Students of politics, economics, and religion has long known that family bonds played a significant part in the external life of the New England colonies. Less clearly understood have been the balance between external and internal values and between masculine and feminine roles.[2] Precisely where in the tents of Israel stood Rachel, Hannah, and Leah? Did institutions exist to sustain

families or did families exist to sustain institutions? If the creation of families was central, how were the positions of fathers and mothers defined? "Honoured mother"--the phrase rings through letters, diaries, wills, estate accounts, and sermons from seventeenth and eighteenth-century New England. What does it mean? Beneath the frozen sentiment, what were the social, biological, and cultural realities which shaped the maternal role?

* * *

In The Six Bookes of Commonweale, translated into English in 1606, the French political theorist Jean Bodin said that a family must consist of a master and at least three other persons, whether they be his children, slaves, freedmen, or free dependents who have voluntarily submitted to his authority. Bodin was obviously describing the family as a political and economic unit. From this perspective, wives were essential but subordinate. In fact, they enter Bodin's definition almost as an afterthought.

But for as much as Families, Colleges, Companies, Cities, and Commonweals, yea, and mankind it selfe would perish and come to end, were it not by marriages (as by certaine Seminaries, or nurseries) preserved and continued, it followeth well that a family cannot be in all points perfect and accomplished without a wife. So that by this account it cometh to passe, there must be five persons at least to make up a whole and entire familie.[3]

First a "master," then at least three "dependents," and last

of all a "wife." For Bodin, economic dependency was clearly anterior to biological or affective bonds.

Bodin's definition, however stark, fits much of what we know about New England in the colonial period. Salem mercantile families in the middle of the eighteenth-century included servants, slaves, and free dependents, just as European families had two centuries before. "Died. Ab. Pope, a maid in my father's house for 14 years, and the 1st death in the family for 42 years," Benjamin Lynde of Salem wrote in his diary in the spring of 1742.[4] Abby Pope was part of the father's "family," as was Benjamin himself, though of course their position within the structure differed. Pre-modern families were hierarchal and patriarchal, yet, as the Lynde quote shows, they were also perceived as organic entities in which even the death of a servant maid could "cut in upon" the whole.

Structural definitions fail to convey the complexity of an institution which meshed economics and sentiment. In March of 1735, Benjamin Lynde's father wrote in his own diary of a frightful morning when storm raged in the Atlantic and illness in the household. In a single prayer, he petitioned for "God's special grace" in restoring his wife to health and in bringing "Captain Groundsell

. . . with his substance" safely into harbor. Climbing with his telescope to the top of the house, Lynde watched the

"raging breackers beyond Baker's Island" until he mustered "some hopes that they [the Captain? the substance? Mrs. Lynde?] might be saved.""[5] Such an episode shows the difficulties in separating material and affective motives. One might reduce Mistress Lynde to a level with the ships or elevate the ships to the status of Mistress Lynde, but it is almost impossible to separate them.

For purposes of analysis, however, we might distinguish within any single family a "family of property," a "family of reproduction," and a "family of sentiment." Each of these "families" must be approached in a different way. The Coffin family of property, for example, can be discerned in the will which Tristram signed in May of 1703; a family of reproduction can be sketched through the birth and death records of Judith's 177 children and children's children; while a family of sentiment can at least be glimpsed in the names which those children bore. By looking at such materials carefully and by relating them to larger patterns for northern New England, we can better understand the concept of motherhood magnified in that intriguing gravestone in Newbury Burying Ground.

Like other prudent fathers of his generation, Tristram Coffin "purchased" an earthly as well as an heavenly estate, adding to the parcels of land apportioned to him as an original settler of Newbury in order to provide for each of

his four sons.[6] At their father's death, James, the oldest of the sons, was in his mid-forties, while the youngest, Nathaniel, had just turned thirty-five and already had five children of his own. Though grown men, all four sons remained economically beholden to their father, and each now received clear title to land which he had probably long been farming. James received part of the father's homestead plus other plots of land in Newbury. Stephen received "housing and upland and meddows with priviliges of Common Rights" in the neighboring town of Haverhill. Peter was given the deed to a farm in Gloucester. Nathaniel, the youngest, inherited his father's "now dwelling house with my barnes and pastuour land a joyning."

Like many aged widows in New England, Judith Coffin received a comfortable maintenance rather than the traditional "thirds." Nathaniel was instructed to "take spesshall care" of his mother to "provid for har in all Respectes." The other sons were to help, paying their brother a fixed sum annually for their mother's support. As for the daughters, their portions had probably long since been paid, perhaps in sheets, kettles, coverlets or cattle given at marriage. Tristram willed Judith, Mary, and Lydia small amcunts of money and promised Deborah twelve walnut trees. He also made a number of small and perhaps sentimental bequests to grandchildren--including three

grandsons named Tristram.

The pattern is familiar--land for sons, moveables for daughters, and for widows a carefully defined dependency. "families of property" in New England, as elsewhere in the western world, revolved upon the orderly transmittal of wealth and livelihood from father to son. Other aspects of this patriarchal order are equally familiar--the selection of one son, often as in this case the youngest, to assist the aging father and eventually inherit his homestead; the clustering of other sons in a family neighborhood in the original town; the hiving out of remaining sons into new towns in the region; the marriage of daughters to the sons of nearby farmers.[7] All of these patterns would be repeated in the next generation with Nathaniel's children, though with variations. Nathaniel's sons would become ministers as well as farmers, and the father would look further north and east to provide for them. Tristram Coffin's family extended to Hampton and Haverhill; Nathaniel's to Kittery and Pennacook.

The story of such families traces the larger history of the expansion of northern New England. But for our purposes, we must compress Tristram's "family of property" to a single piece of land, the homestead where he and Judith began their lives together. Measured continuity, a cherished theme in the history of New England, is perfectly embodied in the

weather-blackened house which still stands across High Road from the graveyard where they are buried. For three centuries it sheltered their descendants.

Dendrochronological evidence corroborates the traditional date of 1650 for the oldest portion, a twenty by twenty by twenty five foot structure with one large room below and a chamber above. When Tristram willed the house to Nathaniel in 1704, it had probably acquired a one-story addition to the right of the chimney, giving it the asymmetrical hall/parlor plan so typical of seventeenth-century Essex County houses. By 1750, when Nathaniel passed it to his son Joseph, it had been dramatically extended. The grandfather's old house was now a rear ell, connected to a new, more symmetrical dwelling facing High Street, the main thoroughfare into the growing town of Newburyport.[8] But the expansion of the Coffin house describes the expansion of the colonial economy rather than any real shift in family status. Nathaniel, like his father, was Deacon of the Church. Joseph, like his father, was clerk of the town, Joshua, like his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather before him, signed his name "Esquire" on the numerous citizen petitions which describe the external history of Newbury.[9]

The successive mistresses of the Coffin house were of course not Coffins at all. Judith Scerby was followed by Sarah Brocklebank who was succeeded by Margaret Morse. The second and third Mistresses Coffin enjoyed a more elaborate house than the first. Sarah's cavernous fireplace gave way to a more efficient eighteenth century hearth and oven. A new front entry and additional upstairs chambers made possible for the first time some demarcation of private and public space, but such changes were superimposed upon a familiar workaday world. The house still stood at the center of the family enterprise which each son had inherited from his father. Though in 1761, Joseph reported that the old orchard had not produced "more than two barrells of cyder a year for ten years last past," he passed on to his son much the same collection of pasture, farm land, and tanyards which he had inherited from his father.[10] As dependents and as skilled servants of the Coffin "family of property," Judith, Sarah, and Margaret performed much the same roles.

Like most couples in most parts of the world before the demographic revolution, Judith and Tristram had their first child within a year of marriage and another child every year or so thereafter. But unlike many villagers in the old world and some in the new, they raised most of these children to adulthood. There is an almost saucy irony in

the family name, as though some wind of Yankee humor had swept Puritan Newbury. Death seldom visited the Coffins. When Judith Somerby married Tristram Coffin in March of 1653, she was a widow with three young children, Sarah who was eight, Elizabeth who was six, and Daniel who was not yet three. Another son had died in infancy. Thus, Judith's family was slightly bigger than Tristram's, though the Somerby children acknowledged him as their "Father Coffin." (The early termination of her first marriage and the presence of step-children in the house is of course evidence that not all Newbury families were as long-lived.)

In sixteen years, Judith gave birth to ten Coffin children, all of whom survived. Eight of these, as well as the two Somerby daughters, married and had sons and daughters of their own.[11] This remarkable fertility is the base from which came the multitude celebrated on Judith's gravestone. Thirteen of Judith's fourteen children at one time lived in the original portion of the Coffin house. The family dwelling must have been extraordinarily crowded, though we should not imagine all of these children there at once, stacked into trundle beds, sleeping four abed, or crowded into lean-tos or attic. Except for the Somerby stepchildren, offspring came to the Coffin house one at a time. There might have been eleven children at home for a four year period around 1670, but the chances are good that

some of the older sons and daughters would have been working away, as apprentices, servants, or maids in the homes of less prolific neighbors.

A demographic profile of the Coffin house shows expected patterns of waxing and waning as one generation succeeded another. Judith's second youngest child had been married at least six years when the youngest son Nathaniel brought a bride and two little stepdaughters to the house. Neither Judith nor Sarah ever had to worry about maids. One generation met the needs of another. An aging grandmother could comfort babies and knit stockings while a more energetic daughter-in-law supervised slaughtering or baking. Even a very little child could fetch and bend and carry for her mother or grandmother. As the grandparents declined, the children grew. By the time Tristram and Judith died, Nathaniel and Sarah had sons and daughters old enough to be of real help in the fields and the house. Soon the downward curve would begin again. Sarah's family crossed with Margaret's somewhat earlier than Judith's with Sarah's, but in much the same way. (Figure 1)

Looking beyond the house, however, the waves of increase and decline are far less pronounced. In the family as a whole there was an ascending curve of productivity. By the time Judith's last baby was born in March of 1669, she already had six grandchildren. From 1677 until her death in

1705--twenty-eight years--there was at least one grandchild born in each year. In the most prolific period, from 1686 to 1696, thirty-eight infants were born, almost four a year. Her gravestone should probably be taken literally when it says she lived to see 177 descendants, for two of her four sons and five of her six daughters remained in Newbury, while the others clustered in nearby communities. The oldest son, James, lived in a house separated from the family dwelling only by the dairy. If Judith made any effort to assist at these births, to help during lyings-in, to watch in sickness, and to assist with the nurture of her grandchildren, as many women did, there was little lull in her mothering. One can imagine her greeting each infant in turn, examining noses and earlobes, cowlicks or birthmarks, searching for characteristics which identified each child as a Coffin or a Somerby or a Knight. Each year, her sight may have grown more dim. Near the end, these children may have rocked her in the "grandmother's" cradle which still stands in the old house.[12]

The Coffin family exemplifies premodern reproductive patterns under the most favorable of environmental conditions. There were no devastating epidemics in Newbury in the second half of the seventeenth century. King Philip's War took some young men of the town, including John Coffin and his half brother Daniel Somerby, but it did not

touch the civiliam population.[13] Enoch was the only one of the Coffin children to die before reaching his teens.

Compared with the English and French populations for which data are available, the Coffin family was extraordinary. In Europe, marriages might last on the average from twelve to nineteen years. Among the French peasantry of the same period, about one half of recorded children were dead by the age of ten, while in rural New England between a quarter and a third did not survive to the age of fifteen.

"Statistically speaking," Lawrence Stone has concluded, the premodern family was "a transient and temporary association, both of husband and wife and of parents and children." [14] Similar conditions prevailed in parts of America. In Middlesex County, Virginia, Darret and Anita Rutman have shown, twenty percent of children were orphaned before their thirteenth birthday, thirty percent before reaching the age of eighteen. The father figure in Virginia households might have been "an uncle or brother, the mother figure an aunt, elder sister, or simply the father's 'now-wife'--to use the wording frequently found in conveyances and wills." [15]

Yet the Coffin family history seems well in line with early demographic studies of some nearby communities. Many New England couples lived together into old age, seeing their progeny multiply around them. In Judith and Tristram's generation, nearly sixty percent of completed

families in the Essex County town of Andover raised seven or more children to adulthood, while the predominance of aging parents in the town created a conservative and patriarchal society in which married sons were economically bound to their fathers, much as the Coffin children seem to have been to theirs. A similar pattern has been discerned in Ipswich, where death rates seem to have been even lower in the seventeenth century than in Andover.[17]

The demographic profile exemplified by the Coffin family was by no means unique in northern New England, especially in the seventeenth century. But it coexisted with, and in some communities was superseded by, more traditional patterns of early death and separation of spouses and children. Mortality rates approached European levels in seventeenth-century Salem, and by the second quarter of the eighteenth-century had also increased in interior towns like Andover. On the frontier, in the early 1700's, plague followed war, culminating in the "throat distemper" (or diphtheria) epidemic which broke out in Kingston, New Hampshire in 1735, then spread relentlessly, eastward into Maine and southward into Essex County.[17] In Newbury, in October of 1735, one family buried four children in a single grave, two on Saturday and two on Sunday.[18] Families like the Coffins thrived in a world in which impermanence was an expectation if not always a reality.

Patterns of property and of reproduction are more easily discerned than the attitudes and feelings which accompanied them. Yet some hint of the Coffin "family of sentiment" survives in the most accessible of historical records--the names which parents gave their children. Surnames reflect the patriarchal and patrilineal structure of New England families. Given names reveal a more complex and varied world, a particolored landscape marked by more subtle metes and bounds. Baptismal records from the region contain such a procession of Elizabeths, Marys, Sarahs, Hannahs, Daniels, Josephs, and Samuels that it is sometimes hard to discover any pattern at all. Yet even the most ordinary of names was probably chosen by design. Names like "Elizabeth" or "Samuel" seldom sprang directly from scripture but from each family's immediate and most intimate past.[19]

A full exploration of naming patterns could tell us a great deal about family boundaries in colonial America. Even the briefest excursion substantiates two conclusions. "Families of sentiment" were matrilineal as well as patrilineal, and they were oriented toward the past. An occasional "Seaborn" testifies to the existence of a new world, but most names link to a long chain of progenitors, with each generation turning toward the one just before. Most New England children, if not named for their parents,

were named for their parents' parents or their parents' siblings. But chain is the wrong word to convey the complexity of such bonds. Because names came from both sides in roughly equal proportions, each new family symbolically joined two branching families of origin. The genealogist's metaphor is better. In towns like Newbury, the roots and foliage of the old families spread luxuriantly until it was difficult to distinguish kin from neighbor.

Were colonial New Englanders conscious of these extended families? Some of them certainly were. In 1722, Tristram and Judith's nephew, Stephen Greenleaf, decided to tally the descendants of his maternal grandfather, the first Tristram Coffin, who had come to America in 1642 with his widowed mother, his wife, and his five children. Stephen remembered his great-grandmother Coffin. Perhaps his childhood memories helped to focus his genealogical interest on his mother's rather than his father's family. He counted 1138 descendants, 570 of them tracing to his mother, Elizabeth, or to his uncle Tristram, the two Coffin children who remained in Newbury.[20] For most people the concept of family was probably less expansive, though there is good evidence that consanguinity played a much wider role in ordinary life than it does today.[21]

Awareness of the clan began with the nuclear family, however. This is why naming patterns are so interesting.[22] Among the one-hundred-forty-two grandchildren of Tristram Coffin and his sister Elizabeth Greenleaf, eighty-six percent were named for parents, grandparents, aunts, or uncles, yet these names were not chosen randomly. In christening their children, parents fulfilled the Biblical command: "Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother." Almost as frequently they responded to what must have been an equally powerful psychological need to restore some part of the immediate family now lost. Both impulses are amply illustrated among the grandchildren of Judith and Tristram.

On October 31, 1677 Deborah Coffin married Joseph Knight and her younger sister Mary became the wife of Joseph Little. One can only imagine the summer's prelude to those autumn weddings. Had one sister's courtship inspired the other? Or had the loss of a son in the spring somehow nudged the father into settling his daughters? In one day, Tristram and Judith gained two sons. Before the year was out, there were two new grandchildren. Mary delivered a granddaughter in July and Deborah another in October. Both babies became "Judith." In marriage each daughter had lost her father's name and in a very real sense had become submerged in a new family of property, but with the birth of

a daughter each turned back to her family or origin.

In this family, their behavior was typical. Two out of three first daughters among the Coffin descendants named one child for each grandparent on both sides. The new little Judiths already had a three-year-old cousin, Judith Sanborn of Hampton. Before their grandmother's death in 1704, there would be seven more namesakes--Judith Pike, Judith Clark, Judith Hale, Judith Little, and three Judith Coffins. There were almost as many Tristrams. All but one of the children named a daughter for their mother and a son for their father. The one exception is significant. Nathaniel, the youngest son, heir to the homestead and custodian of the aged mother, the child most visibly bound to the parents, was the only one who did not pass on their names. Perhaps the honoured parents were simply too much with him.

But in naming his first son "John" and the second "Enoch," Nathaniel demonstrated the second powerful motif. Both names belonged to brothers now dead. Nathaniel had been six when Enoch died; he was eight when John went off to the Indian wars. Both deaths, coming after two decades without a loss must have been deeply felt in the family. Lydia's first son, born in 1680, might have been named George for his paternal grandfather or Moses for his father, the usual practice. Instead he too became John. Twelve days later Deborah gave birth to her first son, named for

the same lost uncle. The death of John Coffin might not account for every one of the Johns among the Coffin grandchildren, the name is after all a common one, but Enoch's death certainly explains the three children by that name in the family. Among the living brothers, the names of Peter and Stephen appear but once and those of James and Nathaniel not at all.

Death was only one of many possible motives for singling out a particular name. Three Coffin children named a daughter for Lydia, but only one for Deborah, though the reason is impossible to determine. Did they prefer one sister to another? Or only her name? Nathaniel's first daughter was named "Apphia," a name with a curious history in the family. His wife, Sarah, had a stepsister of that name who was about her age. Sarah married her first husband, Henry Dole, at about the same time that Apphia married Nathaniel's brother, Peter Coffin. Perhaps Apphia's removal to Gloucester explains why Sarah named her first daughter for the now distant sister. When Sarah married Nathaniel Coffin, this Apphia was just five years old. Within a year, she died. When a Coffin daughter arrived four years later, she too became "Apphia," in remembrance of her mother's stepsister and her own.

Parents frequently named one child for another who had died. In March of 1696, for example, Deborah's John died at the age of six. When another boy was born nine months later, he received his brother's (and his uncle's) name. Mary had two Josephs; Stephen had two Tristrams; and Peter as well as Nathaniel had two daughters named Apphia. Such a custom may demonstrate indifference to the individual identity of young children, as some historians have suggested, but it also represents a now forgotten way of transcending death through progeny, of extending and enlarging each family's past through a link to the living present. The custom of naming a child for a dead sibling was part of a larger pattern of remembrance. Almost all New England children, whether named for grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, or lost brothers or sisters, became carriers of the past. Each family existed in the sum of its parts.

"Families of property" were built upon the transfer of land and livelihood from fathers to sons. Within these families, women were secondary and dependent. "Families of reproduction" were determined by biological cycles of birth and death. Although Providence, not individual choice, decreed how many children one would have or how long a marriage would survive, women of necessity stood at the physical center of these families, not only in youth but in middle age as the stage of mothering merged with the stage

of grandmothering. At the deepest level, "families of sentiment" responded to a tension between the felt need to perpetuate the clan and the apparent fragility of any individual. Birth and death, more than any sequence of action in between, directed the focus of feeling.

All three families helped to create the idealized motherhood magnified on the gravestone of Judith Coffin. "Grave, sober, faithful, fruitfull vine was she"--"grave and sober" because she stood at the bridge of life and death, "faithful" because she lived to serve rather than to own, "fruitful" because in her 177 descendants she had surmounted mutability. Returning to her "Savior's breast," she would live in the memories of her children and her children's children. Defined in private experience and in public pronouncement these qualities characterized the maternal role in early New England.

* * *

Writing from England in June of 1688, Muriel Mosely sent word to her brother Nathaniel Saltcnstall that his "dear Mother" had died. There had apparently been a breach in the family, a conflict between Nathaniel and his father over property. Despite the problem, Muriel wanted Nathaniel to know that he had lost "a praying mother, a Carefull, painfull, tender hearted, self-denying mother; who did what she could for you, and beyond her power; for she abridged

her self of necessarys that she might save a little for you." [23] Sainly motherhood was not invented in the nineteenth century nor in America. It was a theme dear to devout Christians on both sides of the Atlantic. In early eighteenth-century New England, it became a favorite theme of the publishing ministry. In a sermon preached at the death of his own mother, Cotton Mather went so far as to consider whether the Hcly Spirit might be the maternal member of the Trinity. Since there was a Father and a Son, certainly there should be a Mother as well. [26] By 1713, Mather was no longer content to proclaim that the curse of Eve had been wiped out in Mary, he was prepared to defend Eve herself, "And that brave Woman, being Styled, The Mother of all the Living, it has induced Learned Men to conceive, That Eve was, by being the First of them all, in a peculiar manner, the Mother of all that Live unto God; and that she was on this account (Oh! most Happy Woman!) a Mother to her own Husband, and the Instrument of bringing him to Believe in the Great Redeemer." [24] Two years later, Benjamin Colman reversed an ancient metaphor in proclaiming that "Adam bore the Name of the Dying Body, Eve of the Living Soul." [25]

In such pronouncements, the idealization of motherhood received its fullest expression. Puritan motherhood was not Victorian motherhood, however. Three crucial factors determined the particular nature of the maternal role in

early New England.

1. Mothers represented the affectionate mode in an essentially authoritarian system of childrearing. Men like Tristram Coffin presided over a world of finite resources and uncertain need. In any generation a "family of reproduction" might overwhelm a "family of property." Most men and women had neither the ability nor the inclination to limit the first nor to effect dramatic changes in the second. True, there was land beyond Pennacook and Kittery, but there were limits to what could be attained, cleared, and (especially in this era) defended. For many reasons, New Englanders also had a deep fear of social disintegration. They cherished stability even when they could not attain it. To provide for succeeding generations but also to protect the needs of the whole, including the aged, the orphaned, and the widowed, patriarchal order was seen as essential. Families could not be fed on sentiment.

2. Mothering was extensive rather than intensive. For women like Judith Coffin, as well as for their husbands, there were also tensions between "property" and "reproduction," though these would be focused upon the immediate rather than the future needs of the family--how to keep feathers in beds, fresh milk in porridge, or stockings on multiplying pairs of feet. Only in infancy were children simply children. As soon as they could pluck goose feather

or dry spoons, children were also servants. Hired servants, at the same time, were children, needing clothes of their own, firm discipline, and instruction in the Bible. If babies were referred to as "it," this was not only a sign of undeveloped personality but also of the continually changing but persistent identity of the youngest family member, as one baby succeeded another. In middle age, mothering extended to grandmothering, bearing gave way to assisting at birth, and (for some women) the nurturing of biological children to the "schoolin'" of others.

3. Motherhood was still closely keyed to the folk concept of fertility. Whatever their demographic history, the values of early New Englanders were still planted in a world where most children did not survive. To bear children, and above all, to see those children bear children were accounted rich blessings. Though reproduction was uncontrollable, the source of real tensions for fathers and for mothers, it was also highly valued. To have 177 descendants was to achieve a crown on earth.

All three patterns affected the nature of the maternal role. In an authoritarian setting, mother love or any other form of human love could never be an unqualified good. When they sought a metaphor for spiritual nourishment, ministers frequently turned to mothering and especially to breastfeeding. But such unqualified giving was potentially

troublesome in life, an invitation to disorder. "Persons are often more apt to despise a Mother, (the weaker vessel, and frequently most indulgent,)" one minister told his congregation. Another explained that "by reason of her blandishments, and fond indulgence" a mother was more often subject to irreverence than a father.[26] Here the valuation was negative. Because indulgence brought its own reward in disrespectful children, maternal love had always to be balanced by paternal government.

This distinction is beautifully developed in the "Valedictory and Monitory Writing" which Sarah Goodhue of Ipswich composed just before her death in 1681. Having a premonition that her ninth travail would be her last, she wrote a long letter of farewell, folding it up among her husband's papers with instructions to open it "if by sudden death I am taken away from thee." Her prescience was deemed so remarkable and her pious resignation so edifying that her letter appeared in print not long afterward. As a document "profitable to all that may happen to read the same," it is surprisingly personal, as long passages of sober advice open into delicate vignettes of seventeenth-century family life. Sarah urged her children to obey and honor their father, "for I must testify the truth unto you, and I may call some of you to testify against yourself; that your Father hath been loving, kind, tender-hearted towards you all." Had the

children any reason to doubt it? Sarah's concern seems to imply that they did. Perhaps a need to govern the growing family, to suppress any tendency toward indulgence in himself, had somehow created an emotional distance between the father and the older children. The mother stood in the breach, justifying and defending the stronger parent.

You that are grown up, cannot but see how careful your father is when he cometh home from his work, to take the young ones up into his wearied arms, by his loving carriage and care towards those, you may behold as in a glass, his tender care and love to you every one as you grew up: I can safely say, that his love was so to you all, that I cannot say which is the child he doth love best.

The father's instruction, his reproofs, his "laying before you the ill event that would happen unto you, if you did not walk in God's ways," had all been intended for their good, Sarah told her children. How could they forget it? Their godly mother, about to give her life to bring another child into the world, had given them her solemn testimony-[27]

Sarah Goodhue's letter describes a mode of parenting common in early America. Tender nurture and open expressions of affection in early childhood gave way to firm discipline and pious rule-making as the children grew. Parents reinforced their own authority with frequent reminders of the correcting power of God.[28] Although both men and women may have fondled babies, spanked toddlers, and chastened teens, the affectionate side of childrearing was symbolically linked with mothers, the authoritarian with

fathers.[30] It could hardly have been otherwise. Mothers were responsible for the very survival of children in their earliest and most vulnerable years, fathers for the hard decisions of emerging adulthood, the questions of land and livelihood.

When a father was missing, the town fathers stood in his place, sometimes creating visible conflicts between authority and affection as mother love struggled with economic reality. In November of 1670, for example, Wiboroe Gatchell found herself in the stocks for "abusing" Richard Prince and "offering to take away his servant." The servant was Gatchell's own son, an apprentice to Prince.[29] In another case, Thamar Quilter tried unsuccessfully to break the contract which bound her only son Joseph to William Buckley of Ipswich. When Joseph became ill, the widow Quilter made frequent visits to his master's house becoming "greeved to the harte" at conditions there. His room was cold, she told the court, and Buckley was "harsh to him (tho the boy as is well known was in great extremitye.)" When Buckley offered to let her take Joseph home, she was at first unwilling yet with "a mothers bowel yerneing toward my child. . did not turne him backe; feareing he might perish." Though she insisted that Buckley had been the one to break the contract, the courts forced her to return her son.[31] In apprenticeship cases, affection seldom outargued

authority.

In a more spectacular case involving young Joseph Porter of Salem, mother love at last tempered justice. In March of 1664, Porter was sentenced to stand in the gallows and then to be whipped, imprisoned, and fined. He might have died. According to a contemporary, "If the mother of the said Porter had bot been overmored by hir tender & motherly affections to forbear, but had joyned with his father in complaining & craving justice, the Court must necessarily have proceeded with him as a capitall offender, according to our law, being ground upon & expressed in the word of God, in Deut 22:20, 21." The Biblical dictum, never applied in Massachusetts, required death for a stubborn and rebellious child. Porter had not only disobeyed his parents, he had slandered them. When his mother tried to correct him, he said her "tongue does like a perrimonger." [32]

Goody Porter's tongue may indeed have run on "like a perrimonger." Our concern, however, is not with childrearing practices as such, but with contemporary perceptions of mothering. In this regard, Goody Porter's personality and even her motives are of little consequence. In relation to her own husband, she was perceived as "tender." Like Sarah Goodhue, Thamar Quilter, and Wihoroe Gatchell, she represented the affectionate mode in a dual concept of

parenting.

Mothering in early New England was extensive rather than intensive. Although godly mothers might breast feed their babies and remind their growing children of the ever present care of God, they were often forced to trust the details of child care to servants, older children, or fate. Seventeenth and eighteenth century households were busy and cluttered places where at any given moment everyone and no one might be watching the children. When Alice Walton came in from the field after taking her husband his dinner, she found her toddler missing. "It was here Just now presently," an older daughter exclaimed. But the mother was too late. The child had drowned in an unfenced water hole. When Thomas Newall's child drowned in a two-foot-deep pit near his house, he sued a neighbor, who had apparently dug the pit for tanning. Other neighbors testified that the tanner had filled in the pit but that Newall's own son had dug it out again to keep alewives in. His mother testified that the child was out of her sight no more than thirty minutes to an hour. Within the house there were similar dangers. Nicholas Gilman's five and half year old son, Tristram, fell through a trap door in a shop chamber where he was playing. Not long afterwards, a Gilman cousin "narrowly escaped drowning being fallen into a Kettle of Suds," but was "Seasonably Spyd and pulld out by the Heels."

Hannah Palmer's daughter was not so fortunate. While her mother was still lying-in and perhaps grieving from the loss of twins born five days before, she fell into a kettle of scalding water and lived but a day.[33]

Open fires, wash kettles, and unfenced streams and ponds competed with measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, and intestinal worms as potential killers, yet mothers had little time to dote upon their children even in the most dangerous age of their life. Some parents dealt with the fragility of life through emotional disengagement, a mode which could lead to indifference if not outright neglect. For other parents, the imminence of death reinforced a concern with the salvation of their growing children. The little Maine boy who refused to go to sleep each night until his mother had heard his prayers may have been precociously pious, as his minister believed, but he had also discovered an effective way to capture and hold his busy mother's attention.[34] For many women, personal piety became a form of nurture. With heavy responsibilities, little time, and few resources, they could at least admonish and pray.

If mothers in early New England could not focus intense care and concern on any one child, they could extend the nurturing role into the community in the support of other women in childbearing, in casual surveillance of one another's children, in the more formal tutelage of servants,

and sometimes in the development of neighborhood "dame schools," which were as much systems of communal day care as "schools" in any modern sense.[35] This more general notion of mothering reached into old age. Among the gentry, a young man might remember his grandmother as a "tender parent." In rural villages, any old woman was a "mother" or a "gammar."[36]

The extensive nature of mothering also helps to account for the existence in rural communities of witches. If a witch was by definition a bad neighbor, she was also a bad mother. Instead of nursing babies, she gave suck to familiar spirits or to the devil himself. Witchcraft is closely linked with fertility in its larger sense.[37] Witches killed pigs, blasted babies, and cast spells on pubescent girls. Elements of this lore survived in country towns well into the eighteenth-century. When Sarah Keene of Kittery discovered what appeared to be an extra nipple under one of her breasts, she worried about it enough to ask her neighbor Elizabeth Pettegrew if she thought it were possible to be a witch without knowing it. Years later, the aura of witchcraft still pursued her. When John Spinney was rowing home from the tavern one evening in 1725, he struck at a spectre in the water, telling his companions that it was "Mother Kene or the Devil."[38]

Witchcraft belief (as distinguished from witchcraft prosecution) confirms the social nature of the maternal role. Because women were perceived to have real, though mysterious, power, they could become the focus of communal fear and anger. But it also testifies to the psychological complexity of mothering in this insecure and frightening environment. As Bruno Bettelheim has shown, fairy tales with their wicked witches, cruel stepmothers, and fairy godmothers allow children to separate the tender, all-giving, self-denying aspects of motherhood from the angry, punishing, and revengeful. Only by separating the frightening mother from the real mother, can a child feel fully protected by her.[39] In early New England, of course, witches were not fantasies but realities, a measure perhaps of the depth of conflict and need for security in this often incomprehensible world. There should be no surprise in finding witchcraft in the same time and place as idealized motherhood.

Even on the most sophisticated level, the concept of motherhood was closely tied to fertility. Aside from any abstract quality of character or spirit, fruitfulness in itself conferred status. This is why the crown of mothering came in old age when a woman might see not only her children but her children's children. "May [you] glorifi the Lord in helping to buld up the house of jacobbe ycr father," Margaret

Thatcher wrote to her ailing and presumably pregnant daughter in October of 1686. Father Jacob was of course the biblical Jacob, but the spiritual service which this mother rendered began in biological reproduction, though of course it did not end there. Mistress Thatcher hoped to see her little grandchildren become "pious stones" in the house of the Lord. "[T]hem i do herit in trace," she wrote.[40]

The births and deaths of grandchildren could touch grandmothers in an especially powerful way, for each one was in some sense a "remainder" of herself. During the diphtheria epidemic of 1735, Deborah Jaques of Newbury went into an upstairs chamber to fetch some candles which were kept in a bushel basket under a bed. As she leaned over to return the basket to its place, she saw what seemed to be a little hand in a striped boy's sleeve though there was no child to be found in the house. One week following this apparition, her grandson Henry died, followed by Ebenezer, and then by Stephen.[41]

Philip Greven has shown the conservative effect which patriarchal longevity had upon "families of property" in early New England. Matriarchal longevity may have been equally important in sustaining and enlarging "families of sentiment." There is suggestive evidence of this in a genealogical record from eighteenth century Ipswich. Elizabeth Rogers Appleton was fourth in a succession of

godly grandmothers descende frœ Dorothy Dudley. Her grandmother, Patience Denison, died at 71. Her mother, Elizabeth Rogers, was something of a marvel to her relatives at the age of eighty. Elizabeth herself outlived both her mother and her grandmother, dying in 1754 at the age of ninety-one. Like the Coffins of Newbury, the Appletons of Ipswich were given to counting their progeny, but the demographic profile of the two families is strikingly different.

In the last years of her life, Elizabeth summarized the family record which she had kept, interspersing brief sentiments among the names and dates.[42] Only five of her nine children lived to marry, and among these, Priscilla died at the age of 28 leaving only one child, a boy who died himself soon after his tenth birthday. Two of Elizabeth's daughters and the wives of two of her sons lived to the end of their childbearing years, producing twenty grandsons and twenty granddaughters--but fewer than half of these children survived. The grandsons were especially vulnerable, perhaps because of some inherited disorder aggravated by the custom of intermarriage among the Ipswich elite. The family record of Daniel Appleton is especially grim. His wife gave birth to eleven children in the nineteen years between 1717-1736. Only three survived. One of these, an unmarried daughter named Margaret, expired at the age of twenty-two, as her

grandmother said, "after 4 or 5 years weaknes and languishing." The statistics for Daniel's brother Nathaniel appear cheerful only in comparison. His wife bore thirteen children in twenty-one years. Six survived.

Two themes emerge from Elizabeth Appleton's running commentary on the demographic reversals in her own family history. The first, predictably, is religious resignation. She seems to have been consoled in the belief that her granddaughter Margaret was "under great conviction and received joy and comfort" during the last stage of her illness. But there is anguish as well as piety in the grandmother's reflections, a sense not only of communal but of personal loss, as each tender shoot on her vine was blasted. "so it pleased Gcd to take away one after another of my dear children, I hope, to himself," she wrote after the death of a grandchild. When a great-granddaughter died very suddenly at the age of two, she could only note, "another bitter bereavement of a dear pleasant desirable grand child."

At the very end of the record, Mrs. Appleton brought the two themes together, summarizing her gains and losses and affirming her deepest hopes:

Hear is an account of all my posterity.
6 sons and 3 daughters, 20 grand son and
20 grand daughters, 58 in all. 33 are
gon before me. I hope I shall mett them
all att Christ's rit hand among his
sheep and lambs. I often look over this
list with sorrow but with comfortable

hopes that they which are gone are gon
to rest and I desire they that survive
may remember their creator in the days
of thire youth, and fear God betimes.

Elizabeth Appleton considered herself the mother not only of the living but of the dead--of the Margarets, Elizabeths, Daniels, Johns, and Nathaniels who had gone before as well as of those who remained. She could not know with certainty that all had been saved any more than she could be positive of her own election. But family pride as well as religious conviction gave her "good hopes."

In this she was not alone. Long before the Great Awakening, New England burying grounds give evidence of the optimism of orthodox parents, men and women who knew that their children were elected to salvation or damnation by the supreme will of God and that earthly baptism gave no guarantee of salvation. When Samuel Sewall's sister Mehetable died in 1702, her marker confidently promised reunion with "her glorified son William," a child who had died two years before.[43] Three years later, Mehetable's nephew, Samuel Moody, a staunch Calvinist who preached hellfire and damnation to three generations of Maine children, allowed this hopeful sentiment to be inscribed beneath the winged death's head on the marker of his infant daughter:

RESURRECTION

To Immortality in spotless Beauty, with all Other
Bodily Perfections, after the fashion of Christs
Glorious Body, is expected for the

Sub adjacent Dust of Lucy Moodey
 Who was born, & died, July the 6 1705
 Thus Birth, Spousals to Christ, Death, Coronation
 All in One Day may have their Celebration.[44]

For tiny Lucy, "Spousals to Christ" through baptism could not ensure a crown on high, yet her bereaved parents not only hoped for but expected "Coronation." A family in heaven enlarged a family on earth.

* * *

We have described an ideal of motherhood which focused upon tenderness, self-denial, piety, and fruitfulness, and which traced a progression from the intense nurturing of infants through the haphazard but pious watchfulness of growing children to an old age characterized by economic dependency, religious resignation, and an absorbing concern with the next generation. All of these themes are realized in a graceful poem which Anne Bradstreet composed of her own children sometime after 1656.

I had eight birds hatcht in one nest,
 Four Cocks there were, and Hens the rest,
 I nurst them up with pain and care,
 Nor cost, nor labour did I spare,
 Till at the last they felt their wing.
 Mounted the Trees, and learn'd to sing.

The emotions of the mother bird turn on two related issues--her fears for her children and her perception of her own changing role in relation to them. She had done her best, had bred them, fed them, and with her "wings kept off all harm." Now there was little she could do but pray that

her children would avoid the "Fowlers snare." Meanwhile, she could sit in the shade and sing, contemplating her own flight into that "country beyond sight."

But the poem did not end there. For the aging bird, immortality lay not only in the far country but in her song and in her children's memories.

When each of you shall in your nest
 Among your young ones take your rest,
 In chirping language oft them tell,
 You had a Dam that lov'd you well.
 That did what could be done for young,
 And nurst you up till you were strong,
 And fore she once would let you fly,
 She shew'd you joy and misery;
 Taught what was good, and what was ill,
 What would save life, and what would kill.
 Thus gone, amongst you I may live,
 And dead, yet speak, and counsel give.[45]

If the poet ignored the threats within the nest itself, the crowding, the screeching, the insistent demands upon the mother bird, she was only fulfilling the highest expectations of her maternal role. An honoured mother was fruitful, faithful, tender, and giving. Her chief monument was in her progeny.

1. The Coffin gravestones can be found in the burying ground opposite the Coffin house, now owned by SPNEA, 16 High Road, Newbury, Massachusetts. The epitaphs have been printed in Joshua Coffin, A Sketch of the History of Newbury, Newburyport and West Newbury, (Boston: 1845; rpt. Newbury, Massachusetts: Peter Randall, 1977), p. 402.
2. For example, John J. Waters, Jr., The Otis Family in Provincial and Revolutionary Massachusetts (Chapel Hill, N.C.: 1968), which had almost nothing to say about even so political an Otis as Mercy Warren. Philip Greven's Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca, N.Y., 1970), concentrates on fathers and sons. Edmund S. Morgan, in The Puritan Family (New York: Harper, 1966, 1944) argued that by the end of the seventeenth century "theology became the handmaid of genealogy," p. 186.
3. I. Bodin, The Six Bookes of a Commonweale, trans. Richard Knolles, (London: 1606), p. 9.
4. The Diaries of Benjamin Lynde and of Benjamin Lynde, Jr. (Boston: 1880), p. 164.
5. Lynde Diaries, p. 62.
6. Tristram's will has been printed in Old-Time New England, XX:1 (July 1929), p. 10-11.
7. James Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalite's in Preindustrial America," HMQ, Third Series, XXXV:1 (January 1978), pp. 21-32.
8. Richard Candee, "Random Notes On The Construction of the Tristram Coffin Jr. House, Newbury, Massachusetts," TS, Coffin House. The earlier "three-stage" evolution of the house is now questioned by SPNEA. (Personal communication with Abbott Lowell Cummings, January 1980).

9. Coffin, Newbury, pp. 175, 192, 209-210, 218, 232, 236, 239.

10. I have recently discovered the existence of a box of uncatalogued Coffin family papers at SPNEA headquarters in Boston. I intend to examine these more thoroughly, but I have not yet been able to do so. A cursory look at Nathaniel's account books and at the miscellaneous papers with them suggests the continuity pictured in earlier accounts of the family.

11. Judith and Tristram's descendants were traced using genealogical information in Old-Time New England, XX:1, pp. 8, 11-12; Coffin, Newbury, pp. 318, 298, 204, 308, 299, 293, 307; NLD, p. 604, and George Kuhn Clarke, The Descendents of Nathaniel Clarke and His Wife Elizabeth Somerby of Newbury, Massachusetts. (Boston: 1902), pp. 28-29.

12. There is a similar cradle in the Swett-Ilsey house in Newbury and at Old Sturbridge Village.

13. Coffin, Newbury, p. 119, Daniel Somerby Will, 28 March 1676, Essex County Probate Records, 25842. Somerby appointed "my father Coffin" and "my brother Nathaniel Clarke" (his sister's husband) as his executors. His half sister Mary Coffin witnessed the will.

14. Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800, (London: Harper & Row, 1977), pp.

15. Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman, "Now-Wives and Sons-in-Law: Parental Death in a Seventeenth-Century Virginia County," in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, ed., The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century, (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1979), pp. 162, 167-168.

16. Greven, Four Generations, pp. 30, 11, 16. Susan L. Norton, "Population Growth in Colonial America: A Study of Ipswich, Massachusetts," Population Studies, XXV (1971), pp. 440-442.

17. Maris Vinovskis, "Mortality Rates," Journal of Economic History XXXII (1972), pp. 198-199.
18. Charles E. Clark, The Eastern Frontier, pp. 274-277. Coffin, Newbury, p. 204.
19. e.g. in Salisbury, Mass. Church records for 1718-1730, eight names account for over half of the 234 female entries. The names are: Hannah, Mary, Sarah, Abigail, Elizabeth, Judith, Mehitabel, and Ruth. (There were 43 names in all). At Oyster River during the same period (1716-1727), the same top five names dominated the list. There was only one Mehitabel, but six Temperances, and nine Susannas. That Biblical names usually carried family meanings as well is suggested in the "Valedictory and Monitory Writing of Sarah Goodhue," in Waters, Ipswich, p. 522 and in the Seaborn Cotton commonplace Book, MS, New England Historic Genealogical Society, pp. 185-187.
20. Coffin, Newbury, p. 299.
21. Charles G. Steffen, "The Sewall Children in Colonial New England," NEHR, 131 (1977), pp. 163-171 shows the importance of the extended kin networks in the childrearing practices of Samuel Sewall of Boston and his Salem and Newbury relatives.
22. There have been some studies of naming patterns in New England, but all using lineal family names. To recover the full importance of naming patterns requires family reconstitution. Daniel Scott Smith, in an unpublished study of Hingham families, determined that children were important in perpetrating lineage. Which lineage? Smith's study is quoted by Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters, (Boston-Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), pp. 85-86.
23. Saltcnstall Papers, I, 185.
24. Cotton Mather, Maternal Consolations of God (Boston, 1714), pp. 24-25. and Tabitha Rediviva, An Essay to Describe and Commend The Good Works of a Virtuous Woman (Boston, 1713), p. 23.

25. Benjamin Colman, Scene of the Honors that Religion Does Unto the Fruitful Mothers in Israel, (Boston, 1715), p. 7.
26. For positive imagery see for example Samuel Moody, The Children of the Covenant, (Boston, 1716), p. 24; John Cotton, Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes (Cambridge, 1656); for ministerial metaphor, note letter from Joseph and Anna Gerrish to "Dear Sister" in which they lament that Joseph Green, minister at Salem Village, had died young, "his breast full of milk." Jeffrey Papers, MS, Essex Institute. For cautionary comments: Benjamin Wadsworth, The Well-Ordered Family (Boston, 1712) p. 92; John Flavell, A Discourse (Boston, 1728), p. 5.
27. Sarah Goodhue, "A Valedictory and Monitory Writing," reprinted in Thomas Franklin Waters, Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, (Ipswich, Mass: Ipswich Historical Society, 1905), pp. 519-524.
28. Greven, The Protestant Temperament, Part I, passim. and John Demos, A Little Commonwealth, pp. 131-139; Stone, Family, p. 209-15 and David Stannard, The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 64-66.
29. Greven, pp. 22-24.
30. Essex Files, IV, 310, 403.
31. Essex Files, II, 275-276. See also Essex Files, II, p. 28, and V, 417-418.
32. Essex Files, II, 335-338; James Axtell, Schoolhouse Upon A Hill (), p. 156-159.
33. New Hampshire State Papers, XXXX, 127. May, 1657; Essex Files, III, 282; Nicholas Gilman Diary, p. 192; Hannah Pickering entries for Jan. 17-23, 1712, in Burbank Diary, MS, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

34. Samuel Moody, Children of the Covenant, p. 42.

35. Lucy Larcom suggested this motivation for dame schools, A New England Girlhood, (Boston, 1889, rpr. Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1973), p. 39-45. Ashley Bowen's daughter Hannah started school at four; The Journals of Ashley Bowen of Marblehead, ed. Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, Pub. Col. Soc. Mass, 44 (1973), 184. Peggy Holyoke was two, Holyoke Diaries, p. 63. Dame schools were random and quite informal.

36. Jonathan Belcher expressed this "extended" notion of mothering over and over again in his letters to Mary Partridge, his wife's mother. He reminded her that she owed him her prayers because she was his mother, that she should both pray for and write to her grandson Jonathan who was in England ("he is your Child"), and he begged her to take in a black servant named Juba who was giving Belcher trouble and teach him to behave. (The experiment didn't work). See for example, Jonathan Belcher Letterbook, II, Nov. 12, 1731; November 22, 1731; February 7, 1731/2; III, April 2, 1733; November 5, 1733; IV, November 25, 1734, MS, Massachusetts Historical Society.

37. Chadwick Hansen makes this point in Witchcraft At Salem (New York: George Braziller, 1969), pp. 2-3, though doesn't really develop it very much.

38. MPCR, VI, 208-216; Neal W. Allen, Jr., "A Maine Witch," Old Time New England, LXI (Winter 1971), pp. 75-81.

39. Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment, (New York: Vintage, 1977), pp. 66-70; Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum make use of the "wicked stepmother" image in their analysis of witchcraft in Salem Possessed, (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1974), though they confine it entirely to projection of anger against a real stepmother who had taken away land.

40. Letter from Margaret Thatcher, 28 October 1686, Curwen Family Papers, III, MS, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

41. Stephen Jaques Journal, MS, Essex Institute. Also quoted in Coffin, Newbury, p. 204.

42. NEHCB, XXVIII, 36-39. All references to the Appleton genealogy are taken from this reprint of Elizabeth's record. There is some evidence that the preservation of genealogy was a female tole. In a letter written to his Aunt Alice Dummer in 1701, Samuel Sewall asked his grandmother's maiden name: "My Mother being dead, almost all my Memory is dead with her," he wrote. Letter-Book, p. 265. Earlier he had received an "account of my Father's family" from his sisters Hannah Toppan and Mehetabel Mccldey of Newbury, Diary, I, p. 292. Benjamin Lynde, Sr. relied on his sister for information regarding his mother's family, Lynde Diaries, p. 128. Mrs. Mary Sloper of Portsmouth kept a careful record of her parents' family, Charles W. Brewster, Rambles about Portsmouth, Second Series (Portsmouth, N.H.: 1869; rpr. Portsmouth: New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 51-52.

43. Coffin, Newbury, p. 310, 401; careful examination might be able to tie religious themes to visual themes. Allan I. Ludwig, Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650-1815 (Middletown Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1966) shows that New England stone carvers, especially in the interior towns (including the Merrimack Valley), developed soul icons," closer to the "enthusiastic symbols of the primitive church than to the indirect emblems and symbols, narratives and allegories of the baroque period in England;" p. 236-237.

44. Old Gaol Burying Ground, York, Maine. Ray Wilbur directed me to this stone and explained its significance.

45. Anne Bradstreet, Works, ed. Ellis, pp. 400-403.

Part Three

JAEL

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself.

Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?

So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

Judges 5:24-31 "The Song
of Deborah"

Chapter Nine

Blessed Above Women

By 1698 the most famous woman in New England was Hannah Duston of Haverhill. Cotton Mather had published her story twice, first in a sermon printed in 1697 and again the next year in his history of "the Long War, which New-England hath had with the Indian Salvages." [1] John Pike, sometime minister to the straggling village of Cocheco (Dover), New Hampshire, may have learned the story first from Mather's accounts, but news of Hannah's exploit probably spread even more rapidly by word of mouth along the military corridors leading into the war torn eastern parts. To the list of "Observable Providences" collected in his journal for the year 1697, he added:

March 15.--The Indians fell upon some part of Haverhill, about 7 in the morning, killed and carried away 39 or 40 persons. Two of these captive women, viz. Duston and Neff, (with another young man,) slew ten of the Indians, and returned home with their scalps. [2]

Hannah Duston's deed was spectacular. Five days out of child bed, she had marched a hundred miles into the wilderness and with the help of her companion, Mary Neff, and a boy named Samuel Lennardsen had not only killed her captors and escaped but had brought home ten scalps to prove it. [3] Little matter that six of those scalps were of

children, Boston acclaimed her a heroine.

When Hannah visited the city in April of 1697, the month after her captivity, she returned home enriched in reputation as well as in estate. Samuel Sewall entertained her; Cotton Mather interviewed her, then honored her with a sermon at his church; and the Great and General Court, responding to a petition from her husband Thomas, awarded her a scalp bounty of twenty-five pounds, with half that much for each of her two companions.[4] Her name and her significance were to extend beyond her own time and place. Canonized in 1702 in Mather's monumental Magnalia Christi Americana, she became an American amazon, a defender of Israel, and an archetypal heroine of the new world frontier. Certainly her story was exceptional, yet it illuminates in its singularity the culture which produced it.

In Cotton Mather's words, Hannah Duston's heroism imitated "the action of Jael upon Sisera." [5] The Biblical image was apt. In Jael, Mather found a model which both justified and elevated Hannah Duston's deed. The story of Jael is told twice in the Bible, first in a prose account in chapter four of the book of Judges, then again in chapter five in the poetic "Song of Deborah." The tale is a simple one. Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, welcomed the enemy general Sisera into her tent, fed him, lulled him to sleep, and then murdered him by driving a tent peg through

his head. Retold in Deborah's song, this grisly story becomes a narrative and poetic masterpiece, a work which depends for its effect upon careful exploitation of the contrasting images of Jael as nurturer and killer.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife
of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall
she be above women in the tent.

As Sisera entered the tent, she went beyond the ordinary demands of hospitality, bringing milk and butter when he asked only for water, but once he slept, she acted coolly and with resolution. Putting her hand to the nail "she smote Sisera, she smote off his head." The poet relished Jael's triumph in the rhythmic telling of Sisera's death: "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead."

Although Cotton Mather lacked the finesse of his Hebrew predecessor, he did grasp the importance for his own story of contrasting role imagery. Hannah Duston had given birth less than a week before and was still attended by her nurse, Mary Neff, when taken captive. Mather highlighted this situation in his account. He described her "sitting down in the chimney with a heart full of most fearful expectation" as the attackers rifled her house and killed her baby. In his description of the captivity, he again emphasized her femininity, speaking of her "sighs" as well as of her courage. "Like another Hannah," he wrote, she had no

recourse but prayer. In this way he prepared for the ironic conclusion, Hannah's slaughter of the Indians. In the final scene he simply paraphrased the Bible: Duston's Indians "bow'd" and "fell" and lay down" like Sisera befoer them.[6]

Mather recognized the chief literary lesson in his model, yet the affinities between the two stories go beyond narrative technique. In both, the heroism of the woman was magnified as a means of rallying and chastizing a nation. Jael was instrumental in saving Israel at a time of spiritual and military disintegration. Deborah the prophetess had asked a general named Barak to take ten thousand men and attack the army, but Barak had refused to go unless Deborah promised to go with him. "I will surely go with thee," she answered, "notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." (Judges 4:4-9) In context, then, Jael's heroism was a rebuke to Barak, who had been reluctant to defend his nation. The feminist connotations of the story are obvious; Deborah and Jael equal any Biblical male in courage and in fierceness. Yet the purpose of the narrative was not to extoll the military potential of women. On the contrary, the effectiveness of the narrative rests on an awareness of role contradiction. Because Jael was womanly in the traditional sense--and remained so--her ability to kill Sisera testified all the

more powerfully to God's part in her triumph. Her faithfulness was a mirror held up to a flagging Israel.

The Hannah Duston of Mather's story fits this framework well. In her victory God demonstrated His desire to sustain the American Israel even though many of Israel's children had abandoned him. Duston became a killer because the moral order around her had broken down. Moving into a vacuum created by war, she did individually what New England had been unable to do collectively. In the sermon which included the first printed version of Hannah Duston's story, Mather made this explicit: "If we did now Humble ourselves throughout the Land," he wrote, "who can say whether the Revenges on the Enemy, thus Exemplified, would not proceed much rather into the Quick Extirpation, of those Bloody and Crafty men." [7] The conclusion of the Biblical narrative would have fit his own: "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his right." (Judges 5:31)

Seen from this angle, Cotton Mather's story of Hannah Duston is simply a variant of a familiar theme in the history of New England. The late seventeenth century was the age of the jeremiad, of fearful pronouncements of an impending judgment, a cataclysm made all the more possible by the prolonged struggles of the Indian wars. It was also an age of biography. Through portraits of meek, pious, and

prayerful Christians--mostly ministers but also to an increasing extent women--New England's clergymen promoted a vision of a Godly New England, a reformed Israel which lived up to the presumed vision of its founders.[8] The real Hannah Duston, the flesh and blood woman untouched for Mather's portrait, fit awkwardly into this frame, as we shall see. But the drama of her story, as shaped by the Biblical precedent of Jael, fulfilled the dual requirements of "entertainment" and of "holy history" which Cotton Mather set for his Magnalia. In its pages, and in histories of New England written in the centuries since, Hannah Duston plays a colorful but minor part.

Looked at from the viewpoint of women's history, however, the story has a more complex significance. Jael underscores the central elasticity of traditional femininity. Without challenging the presumed weakness of women or denying the primacy of the nurturing roles, her story glorifies both feminine strength and feminine assertiveness. But the context is crucial. Woman acts when man cannot. She performs where and in what way God or the nation wills. On a less abstract level, this is a well-established historical phenomenon. From the angry female petitioners of the English Civil War in the seventeenth century to heavy crane operators of World War II the enlarged scope of female roles in wartime has been well

documented.[9] The long-range impact of such activities is of little consequence, since the ability to temporarily assume male roles and then shrink back into submissiveness has always been an essential part of being female. In this sense, "Rcsy the Riviter" (like Hannah Duston) was simply acting as a "Deputy Husband."

But the myth of Jael goes deeper than that. If woman is capable of assuming male responsibilities in the service of male authority, what is to prevent her from challenging that authority altogether? What contains the immense destructive power beneath the benign feminine mask? Such questions are inherent in the story itself. Even the method of destruction--the nail driven into Sisera's head--is a rude caricature of the male sexual act.

On the surface at least, this was not a problem which troubled Cotton Mather, in itself an important historical clue, for such questions did concern writers and popular moralists of the nineteenth century, many of whom went to great length to deny the aggressive potential of women. One of the ways they did this was to divide women into pure and untouchable blondes and mysterious and dangerous brunettes. Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was more critical of this convention than has sometimes been recognized, nevertheless used it in a number of stories. His characterization of Miriam, the dark lady in The Marble Faun, is worth examining

in some detail for its allusions to the myth of Jael.

Like many of Hawthorne's heroines, Miriam was a woman with a secret. A sinister male figure shadowed her through the streets of Rome, keeping alive haunting images of a troubled past. Miriam longed to rid herself of her oppressor, but because she was a respectable woman (and a character in a Hawthorne novel), she repressed her hatred, venting it only through art in a series of sketches kept in a secret portfolio. One day an innocent young Italian named Donatello came upon her drawings. The first was a sketch "in which the artist had jotted down her rough ideas for a picture of Jael driving the nail through the temples of Sisera." Donatello found it impressive, but he discerned a contradiction in Miriam's conception of her subject. At first she had painted Jael as a figure of "perfect womanhood, a lovely form, and a high, heroic face of lofty beauty,"

but dissatisfied either with her own work or the terrible story itself, Miriam had added a certain wayward quirk of her pencil, which at once converted the heroine into a vulgar murderess. It was evident that a Jael like this would be sure to search Sisera's pockets as soon as the breath was out of his body. [10]

The reference to money in this passage is telling when contrasted with the story of Hannah Duston for her motivation for scalping her victims was openly pecuniary. Without scalps, she would have had no proof of her exploit

and as a consequence no bounty from the General Court.

Such details did not tarnish her heroism in Cotton Mather's eyes. In fact, he was responsible for recording them. But for the nineteenth century writer, such opportunism was impossible in a true heroine. In Hawthorne's view, Miriam's drawings, "grotesque or sternly sad," brought out the moral "that woman must strike through her own heart to reach a human life, whatever were the motive that impelled her." [11] For him, female aggression was simply contrary to nature. He could not sustain the juxtaposition of qualities inherent in the Biblical and in the colonial myth of Jael.

This is more than a literary curiosity. Hawthorne's novel highlights a shift in sensibility of great consequence. Such a shift can be seen even more clearly in nineteenth century accounts of Hannah Duston. Her story, largely forgotten outside her own community by 1800, was revived by Timothy Dwight in his travel sketches published in 1821. For narrative detail Dwight followed Mather's account closely, but he introduced an apologetic note foreign to his predecessor. "Whether all their sufferings, and all the danger of suffering anew, justified this slaughter may probably be questioned by you or some other exact moralist," Dwight wrote, adding that historical precedents "innumerable and of high authority" might be

raised in Duston's defense, but that the strict moralist would "equally question the rectitude of these." Still, Dwight could not condemn Duston outright. Under the circumstances, he concluded, few "would have been able to act the part of nice casuists; and fewer still, perhaps, would have exercised her intrepidity." [12]

Dwight's reservations about Hannah Duston did not arise from sympathy for Indians, whom he described in another passage as "the horde of hell hounds." [13] Like Mather, he saw the hand of Providence in preserving the Duston family from "Savage" assailants. But Dwight elaborated a part of the story which had not been emphasized before, a passage in which Mather described Thomas Duston going in search of his children, resolving to ride away with the first child "which he should in this Extremity find his Affections to pitch most upon, and leave the rest unto the Care of the Divine Providence." Overtaking them, he was unable to choose and so rode "at the Reer of his Little Army of Unarmed Children," firing at the Indians who came after them until they all reached a house of refuge. Dwight found this little episode more attractive than Hannah's own story: "Whatever may be thought of the rectitude of her conduct, that of her husband is in every view honorable." [14]

Successive writers followed Dwight's lead. In "A Mother's Revenge" in his Legends of New England, John Greenleaf Whittier, a Haverhill son, allowed for the temporary insanity of Hannah. Henry Thoreau simply shifted the emphasis in his narrative from the murder to the homeward flight along the Merrimack River. Hawthorne was more blunt. In an account written in 1836 for the American Magazine, he confessed that he admired Thomas Duston but didn't know whom to dislike more--Cotton Mather or Hannah Duston. "Would that the bloody old hag had been drowned in crossing Contocook river," he wrote, "or that she had sunk over head and ears in a swamp, and been there buried, until summoned forth to confront her victims at the Day of Judgment." [15] Hawthorne obviously had some sympathy for the Indians, yet his aversion to Hannah went deeper. Only a "hag" could have behaved in such an unfeminine manner.

When he came to write his history of Haverhill, published in 1861, George Wingate Chase had one more literary version of the story to call upon, Sarah Josepha Hale's poem "The Father's Choice." Again, Thomas Duston, rather than his wife, exemplified the true heroism. Mrs. Hale wrote:

Ambition goads the conqueror on,
Hate points the murderer's brand,
But love and duty, these alone
Can nerve the good man's hand.

The moral was clear. Although he had abandoned his wife and

her newborn infant in flying from the house, Thomas Duston had been motivated by "love and duty." Hannah Duston, who was threatened neither with immediate death or with violation, had been motivated by self-interest and by feelings of revenge.[16]

By the mid nineteenth century, the Duston story, having lost its epic dimensions, had become the property of idealized local history and domestic romance, realms in which female submissiveness was assumed. Little wonder that an aggressive and opportunistic woman like Hannah Duston caused discomfort! In the light of this change, her story becomes even more interesting for the student of colonial women, raising intriguing questions about the nature of female heroism in early America. Were there other assertive females in the wartime literature of northern New England? Was Hannah Duston's response to captivity unique? Was her capacity for violence in any way symptomatic of larger patterns of female behavior? This chapter will focus on the first of those questions, exploring the theme of heroism in the ministerial literature of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

* * *

Hannah Duston was not the first frontier heroine celebrated in New England. By the time she faced the "tawny savages" in her house in Haverhill, war and captivity had

become commonplace themes in New England literature. The earliest heroines emerged in the aftermath of Metacom's Rebellion (or King Philip's War), the first of a devastating series of racial conflicts in New England and one of the most destructive wars in proportion to population in American history. It began in Plymouth Colony under the leadership of Metacom, a son of the same Massasoit who had befriended the pilgrims, but it soon spread into the Connecticut Valley and eventually sparked a related rebellion in Maine. By March of 1676, Metacom's forces had moved within twenty miles of Boston. Before the war's end, fifty-two of some ninety Puritan towns had been attacked and twelve destroyed. Disease and shortages of food and ammunition eventually defeated the Indians, but not without immense psychological and material loss for the English-[17]

Before the war, some New Englanders had been confident of "Christianizing" the Indians, and few had any doubt of the military superiority of the whites. The power of the Indian rebellion was a surprising and demoralizing blow. At the end of the war surviving red leaders were either executed or exported as slaves, ending any hope of peaceful coexistence of the two races and creating a legacy of fear and hate which would periodically erupt on the northern frontier in the next century-[18] Ministerial narratives published at the end of the war attempted to derive

historical and spiritual lessons from an experience which had left few New Englanders untouched.

For our purposes, the three most important literary documents of Metacom's Rebellion are Increase Mather's A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New England, (1676) William Hubbard's A Narrative Of The Trouble With The Indians In New England (1677) and Mary Rowlandson's story of her own captivity published in 1682 as The Sovereignty & Goodness of God, Together, with the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed. The most important motif in all three is not female heroism but female suffering. This is most pronounced in Mather's history which invariably describes women as victims. Describing an attack on a group of church-goers near Springfield, Mather not only highlighted Indian cruelty but English cowardice. Eighteen well-armed men had fled while two women and their children were captured. "O Lord What Shall I say When Israel turns their backs before their Enemies?" he cried. It was not enough to add that the Indians had killed the babies. Mather heightened the pathos by describing them knocking the infants on the head "as they were sucking their mother's breasts." [19]

The "sucking infant" theme was a popular one with New England writers who wanted to enlarge upon Indian cruelty. The most gruesome example is in Hubbard's description of an

attack on Cape Neddick in Maine. "Having dashed out the brains of a poor woman that gave suck," he wrote; "they nayled the young Child to the dead body of its mother, which was found sucking in that rueful manner, when the People came to the Place." [20] In her story of Goodwife Joslin, Mary Rowlandson used another version of the "outraged maternity" theme. In this case, a woman "big with child" was stripped, placed in the center of a band of singing, taunting Indians, then burned. [21] Assaults upon nursing or pregnant women became the chief evidence of Indian cruelty in the narratives, since there were no instances of rape, a fact which clearly astounded white New Englanders. [22]

Though the heroism of white soldiers appears in a few memorable passages in Increase Mather's history--in the account of a last minute rescue by Major Willard, for instance, or in the story of Captain Wheeler's son "willingly hazarding his own life to save the life of his Father" [23]--there is no room in his narrative for heroines. For him the helpless suffering of women served as a measure of New England's spiritual and physical desolation. Hubbard's history of the war as it developed in Massachusetts doesn't differ from Mather's in this respect, but in his related but separate narrative of Indian conflict in Maine there are some striking differences. Rowlandson, like Hubbard, made use of the passive victim motif, but she

also transcended it. In these works, two versions of the frontier heroine emerged, one symbolized in the godly resignation of Mistress Rowlandson and the other in the self-reliance of one of Hubbard's Maine heroines, Anne Brackett. The essential contrast between the two women can be seen in two incidents involving an escape by water.

Toward the end of February 1676, the Nipmuck, Narragansett, and Wampanag Indians who had been wintering on the Ware River in what is now Barre, Vermont, set fire to their wigwams and prepared to flee from an approaching English force. Among the fleeing Indians was Mary Rowlandson, who had been captured two weeks before in a raid on the Massachusetts town of Lancaster. The "stoutest" men, Mrs. Rowlandson recalled, went off to hold the English army, while the women and children, the old, the sick, and the lame, "like Jehu. . . marched on furiously." She marvelled at the ability of these Indians to survive in the woods without the help of their able-bodied men. Reaching the river, the women felled dry trees to make rafts to carry them over. Mrs. Rowlandson was terrified, "being unacquainted with such kind of doings or dangers." She accounted it a special favour from God that sitting on a pile of brush in the middle of the makeshift raft, she crossed without getting wet. Her initiation into wilderness ways was made even more dramatic when a few hours later the same river stopped the

pursuing English army. For her, captivity was an experience in humiliation, a discovery of her own weakness and vulnerability before God-[24]

The story of Ann Brackett, though far less detailed, contrasts sharply with that of Mary Rowlandson. Despite troubles in southern New England, the Bracketts, who lived on the easternmost fringe of English settlement, on a plantation near Casco Bay in Maine, were not expecting an attack. They had apparently comfortable relations with a local Indian leader named Simon, who had promised to help them find a tribesman suspected of killing their cow. But Simon suddenly turned on them, rushed their house with a small band of compatriots, killed Ann Brackett's brother, and captured the rest of the family, which included Ann, her husband, at least one child, and a black servant.

Simon's attack was impulsive. Once he had the captives, he seemed uncertain of what to do with them. While camped with them on the northern side of Casco Bay, he heard of a successful attack on the Arowsick trading house on the Kennebec. Wanting to share in the plunder but unwilling to drag his captives along, he decided to leave them, telling them they could follow if they wanted some of the booty for themselves. Ann Brackett appeared interested and managed to beg two pieces of meat for the journey, but once the Indians left, she set to work on an "old Burchin

Canoe" which she hoped was "an opportunity Providence offered for their escape." Using a needle and thread found in the camp, she repaired the canoe and with her family "crossed water eight or nine miles broad" to Black Point. There Providence supplied a vessel bound for Piscataqua.[25]

As recounted in Hubbard's history, the Brackett's escape has a fairy-tale quality. One would like to know more about the condition of the canoe and the nature of the repair. But for Hubbard the details were less important than the providential escape. He clearly credited Ann Brackett, rather than her husband or the male servant who accompanied them, with the inspiration, the resourcefulness, and the skill which made the escape possible. Unlike Mary Rowlandson, this Maine housewife was acquainted with wilderness "doings & dangers."

In another passage in the same section of the history, Hubbard praised an unnamed eighteen-year-old girl whose unusual courage, in his view, saved a houseful of women and children from an assault by "two cruel and barbarous caytiffes." It is probably a measure of Hubbard's perception of female weakness rather than of Indian strength that he considered fifteen women and children (he didn't differentiate between the two) totally incapable of defending themselves against two Indian males. They would all have been taken captive or killed, he concluded, but for

the heroism of the maiden of Newechewannick, who "being endued with more courage than ordinarily the rest of her Sex use to be, (the blessing of Jael light upon her) first shut to the dore, whereby they were denyed Entrance, till the rest within escaped to the next house, that was better fortified." This young "Virage," he continued, risked her own life by holding the door fast till the Indains had chopped it to pieces with their hatchets. They then knocked her down, gave her many wounds, and left her for dead, though she recovered enough to reach the next garrison "where she was soon after healed of her wounds, and restored to perfect health again." [26]

A resourceful housewife who used her needles to rescue her family from captivity and a courageous maiden who stood up to a frightening adversary and saved fifteen others--two heroines do not establish a tradition, yet the significance of these admittedly isolated examples is greater than may first be apparent, for in highlighting female heroism, William Hubbard foreshadowed the approach other ministers would take twenty years later. Through invoking "the blessing of Jael," he prefigured the more dramatic celebration of Hannah Duston at the end of the century. It is important then to look somewhat more closely at the setting in which these first frontier heroines emerged.

Seventeenth-century historians (like some of their twentieth century successors) drew sharp contrasts between the compact settlements of Massachusetts with their settled churches and presumably Puritan outlook and the straggling plantations of Maine and New Hampshire where colonists came to fish, not pray. Increase Mather, for example, wrote of one old settler at Casco Bay, a man named Wakely, who was killed in King Philip's War. "He would sometimes say with tears, that he believed God was angry with him, because although he came to New England for the Gospels sake, yet he had left another place in this Country, where there was a Church of Christ, which he once was in Communion with, and had lived many years in a Plantation where was no Church nor Instituted worship." [27] William Hubbard, who told the same story, was usually less pointed in his condemnation of the Maine frontier, but in describing eastern refugees fleeing "like Lot from Sodom," he reinforced the prevailing notion of the "godless East." [28]

It is a short step from these notions to the idea of colonial history as a conflict between inherited religious and communal values and the acquired individualism of a land-rich frontier. Mary Rowlandson and Ann Brackett might represent the female version of this dichotomy. Rowlandson, the godfearing Puritan, was a transplanted Englishwoman thrust into an alien American world. Lacking experience

with the ways of the forest, she dismissed it as the domain of Satan's hosts. Brackett, a daughter of the Maine frontier, had inherited wilderness craft as well as wilderness courage. At home in the new world, she relied on herself.

Biographical details for the two women give some support to these stereotypes. Mary Rowlandson was born in Somersetshire about 1635 and migrated to Salem, Massachusetts as a young child. Though she moved with her family to the new town of Lancaster in her late teens and had lived there more than twenty years when taken captive, her narrative gives constant evidence of resistance to what might be described as "frontier" ways. The passage in which she described her first taste of bear meat in captivity is exemplary: "I have sometimes seen Bear baked very handsomely among the English, and some like it," she wrote, "but the thought that it was Bear, made me tremble: but now that was savoury to me that one would think was enough to turn the stomach of a brut Creature." [29] For Mary Rowlandson wild meat was symbolic of a wilderness she feared. As the wife of Lancaster's first minister, she represented the values of Christianity and civilization. Only extreme hunger in captivity pressed her to partake of meat other white settlers found tasty.

Ann Brackett left no record of her own thoughts or attitudes. The only known anecdote from her life is the escape described in Hubbard's history. Yet what can be pieced together of her background suggests important contrast with Rowlandson. She was the granddaughter of George Cleeves, an independent fisherman and trader, who was the first settler on Casco Bay. She grew up in the most remote and sparsely settled spot in New England, the daughter of Cleeves' only child, Elizabeth, and Michael Mitton, who was associated with his father-in-law in fishing and trading.[30] In contrast to Rowlandson, who described keeping "six stout dogs" in the garrison ready to tear apart any Indian who ventured to the door, the Cleeves and Mittons depended upon daily intercourse with the natives who surrounded and outnumbered them.[31]

We know nothing of Brackett's own religious attitudes, though in reporting her family's captivity, her brother-in-law wrote, "The Lord of late hath renewed his witnesses against us & hath dealt very bitterly with us." [32] One need not imagine the inhabitants of the Maine frontier as a breed apart to recognize that the practical experience of the daughter of an Indian trader might differ in significant ways from that of a minister's wife.

The differences between Rowlandson and Brackett are useful in describing the probable range of female response to wilderness danger, but they should not be pushed too far. There was no rigid contrast between "pale faced Puritan women" of agricultural villages like Lancaster and "ruddy frontier wives" of outlying plantations like Casco Bay. As Rowlandson's own narrative showed, some of her neighbors enjoyed eating bear, and even within the Brackett family captivity could be interpreted in religious terms. The caution goes deeper than that, however, for what we have in these two stories are variant forms of frontier heroism. Although Mary Rowlandson appeared briefly in both Mather's and Hubbard's narratives simply as an object of Indian cruelty, she was neither passive nor helpless. Though she showed no inclination to repair birch bark canoes or engage in hand to hand combat with invading Indians, she had her own kind of courage.

The preface to Rowlandson's published narrative compared the captivity of Christians to those of Joseph, David, and Daniel in the Old Testament, a view which permeated her own perceptions of the experience. For her, life among a people she hated and feared was indeed a lion's den or a fiery furnace, in which strenuous effort was required simply to keep from succumbing to despair. Within this context she exemplified not just heroic faith but a

practical ability to survive by placing her housewifery skills at the service of her captors. inch on the spiritual level.

Thus, in Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative and in William Hubbard's history of the Maine wars, two distinct versions of female heroism emerged. Rowlandson lacked wilderness skills where Ann Brackett embraced them. She quaked before Indian attack where the young maid of Newichawonnek fought back. She feared her Indian neighbors where the Indian traders of Casco did not. Yet she exemplified in her own way frontier courage, self-reliance, and resourcefulness. Her weakness became her strength. Although a victim of Indian cruelty, she emerged from captivity as a spiritual heroine of almost Biblical proportions.

* * *

After King Philip's War, New England experienced a decade of peace. The Massachusetts and Rhode Island natives who had for a time threatened English autonomy in the region had largely been annihilated or driven into exile. Some of them had joined the various tribes of "eastern" or Abenaki Indians who inhabited part of northern and coastal Maine. In 1689, with the outbreak of King William's War, local tensions between whites and natives in Maine and New Hampshire were absorbed in what historians have since called

"the great struggle for Empire," the conflict between Britain and France for dominance in North America. King William's War (1689-1698) and Queen Anne's War (1703-1713) were largely fought in America by Indians, first Iroquois provoked by the English to attacks on the Canadian frontier, but later and more effectively by various groups of Canadian and Maine Indians, often led by French coureurs de bois in devastating raids on exposed outposts in New York and New England.[33]

In the local struggles of King Philip's War, New Englanders had hope of isolating and eventually destroying the enemy. Not so with the elusive yet seemingly ubiquitous bands of warriors spilling out of the wilderness from sanctuary in New France. The one English attempt at a full-fledged assault on Canada--the attack on the French fortress of Quebec--ended in fiasco. For twenty years a succession of unpredictable and debilitating attacks on the northern frontier wreaked psychological and physical desolation. But the events of these wars provided new material for the Boston press. Ministerial literature in New England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries was characterized by a conscious effort to elevate the public image, if not the status, of women.[34] Because Cotton Mather, the chief exponent of the new emphasis, was also the most prominent historian of the

Indian wars, living hercines of the northern frontier took their place in these years beside pious Boston matrons eulogized in countless funeral sermons.

The fighting Jaels prefigured in Hubbard's history are the most colorful, if not the most significant, of the heroines. Like "Molly Pitcher," the legendary water-carrier of the Revolutionary War, who fired a cannon in the pressure of a battle, some women learned to shoot in these first French and Indian wars. In describing an assault on Wells in King William's War, for example, Cotton Mather praised the women of the garrison who "took up the Amazonian Stroke, and not only brought Ammunition to the Men, but also with a Manly Resolution fired several Times upon the Enemy." [35]

For every such account which appeared in public records of the period, there must have been others which survived only in local tradition or family legend. By the end of the eighteenth century, stories of Oyster River heroines had acquired the vivid detail recorded by Jeremy Belknap, whose information, so he said, was collected from "aged persons" by a descendant of one of the suffering families. According to Belknap, no men were inside a garrison near the house of John Drew when a small party attacked in April of 1706. The women, "seeing nothing but death before them, fired an alarm, and then putting on hats, and loosening their hair that they might appear like men, they fired so briskly that

the enemy, apprehending the people were alarmed, fled without burning or even plundering the house which they had attacked." [36] Belknap told of a similar event which occurred at the Heard garrison in Dover in 1712. Again the house was left defenceless when a "woman named Esther Jones mounted guard and with a commanding voice called so loudly and resolutely as made the enemy think there was help at hand, and prevented farther mischief." [37]

These stories fit well with the notion of women as "deputy husbands" able to step into a void created by male absence and fulfill male responsibilities without in any sense altering the prescribed female roles. The emphasis on male disguise in Belknap's stories is significant. As Mather made clear: firing upon the enemy at Wells required a "manly resolution."

There is no way of knowing if Philip Moody's mother personally used the half pound of gunpowder he purchased for her in Nathaniel Perryman's store in Exeter in 1722. [38] Since the French and Indian Wars forced greater general preparedness on the frontier, women may have become more familiar with firearms than in earlier wars, and a few perhaps learned to load and fire on their own. In 1724, Samuel Penhallow of Portsmouth described the heroism of an Oxford woman who shot and killed an Indian who was attempting to break through her roof. According to local

tradition, she had two muskets and two pistols charged and ready for his three companions.[39]

The question of means may be misplaced, however. The important problem is not whether colonial women had the ability to defend themselves but whether they had the will. There were familiar weapons at hand. Hannah Bradley of Haverhill scalded an attacker with a kettle of boiling soap.[40] Given the impulse, a housewife like Hannah Duston, who had undoubtedly slaughtered chickens and skinned and eviscerated animals, would know how to kill and take a scalp.

Thus, a number of intrepid females living on the frontier of New England in the years after 1689 inherited the "blessing of Jael" first invoked by William Hubbard a decade before. They successfully defended themselves and were praised for doing so. This does not mean that fighting was a typical female response. Like most embattled societies before and since, the villages of Maine and New Hampshire evacuated women and children first and expected men to do the shooting.[41] The heroism of women like Hannah Bradley or Esther Jones represented possibility, not probability. Presumed weak, women on the northern colonial frontier might prove themselves strong.

Even more persistent than the image of Jael was the image of the godly captive. The title page of one narrative, published in 1728, states the common theme: "God's Mercy surmounting Man's Cruelty Exemplified in the Captivity and Redemption of Elizabeth Hanson. . . In which are inserted, Sundry remarkable Preservations, Deliverances, and Marks of the Care and Kindness of Providence." [42] It matters little that Elizabeth Hanson was a Quaker or that she lived on a remote farm in a scattered New Hampshire settlement, the purposes of her narrative, to praise God and to promote piety, were those which had motivated Mary Rowlandson fifty years before and which continued to dominate the sermons and histories of Hanson's Puritan contemporary, Cotton Mather.

Forced into submissiveness, the godly captive proved her strength by surviving, then gave the credit to God. As in Mary Rowlandson's day, her Indian captors stood for the powers of darkness. Yet in the wars at the end of the century, God's enemies had acquired a new and awesome ally. Cotton Mather expressed the ministerial perception of this threat when he wrote in a tract addressed to the inhabitants of the Maine frontier: "We hear of a Vexaticus Adversary, Wild Indians, headed and acted by French Papists, breaking in upon you now and then; killing of some, and siezing and snatching away others, for a Captivity, full of

miseries." [43] From the perspective of dissenting Protestantism, the Indian-French combination epitomized the twin-threats of barbarism and false faith. Thus, even more than in King Philip's War, captivity was seen as a "lion's den" or a "fiery, fiery furnace," providing both dramatic stories and instructive lessons for the pens of ministers.

In his history of Queen Anne's War, Cotton Mather argued that God was punishing all New England in a conflict which afflicted taxpayers, soldiers, and the families of soldiers in communities throughout the land. But he gave particular emphasis to the trials of "our dear Brethren in the Frontier. . . who are Posted in the Valley of Achor." [44] The Biblical allusion was to a traditional Palestinian "valley of trouble" where a disobedient Israelite had been stoned for hiding Babylonish spoils salvaged in the conquest of Canaan. New Englanders who searched for providential design in every event had ample reason to suspect that God had indeed singled out the eastern parts for a special chastening. With the exception of Deerfield in the Connecticut Valley of western Massachusetts, no other area of New England suffered so acutely in the French and Indian wars. The vast majority of New England captives taken to Canada between 1689-1728 came from the Piscataqua region of Maine and New Hampshire or the isolated plantations along the Maine coast between Wells and

Pemaquid.[45]

Some settlers in these parts shared Mather's conception of their danger. Hannah Swarton saw her own captivity as a punishment for her family's negligence in removing from the established community of Eeverly, where there was a church and a minister, to the wilderness of Casco Bay, "thereby Exposing our Children to be bred Ignorantly like Indians." [46] John Gyles, a captive of Pemaquid, recalled that after removing to Maine his father had been much troubled by "the Immoralities of a People who had long lived Lawless." [47] Such comments cut in two directions, however. In describing the ungodliness of the Maine frontier, these writers inadvertently testified to the presence there of at least a few articulate settlers of Puritan persuasion. Swarton's narrative is really a standard conversion story, a stylized account of the saint passing through despair toward saving faith. She survived captivity by remembering comforting passages from the scriptures; she resisted the temptations of Catholic kindness through prayer and godly conversations with a fellow captive, Margaret Stilson, who was also from Maine.[48]

John Gyles memoir has an even more vivid portrait of a zealous Maine protestant, his own mother. He recalled her last words to him as they were separated in captivity, "Oh! my dear Child! If it were God's will, I had rather follow

you to your Grave! or never see you more in this World, than you should be sold to a Jesuit."[49] So impressive were her fears, that when a French priest offered him a biscuit, he hid it under a log "fearing that he had put something in it to make me Love him: for I was very Young, and had heard much of the Papists torturing the Protestants, etc. so that I hated the sight of a Jesuit."[50] Captivity taught Gyles to respect both his Indian and his French captors, but he did not forget his mother's teachings. When after six years among the Indians he was sold to a French family, he cried in the woods thinking of how his mother had detested "papists." [51] It is possible, then, that perceptions of the "godless" frontier, like similar attacks on backsliding Boston, might have originated as much from the religious zeal of one portion of the population as from the impiety of the rest.

Neither public officials nor the colonial ministry wanted to see the frontier abandoned. From a military standpoint, the settlements in Maine and New Hampshire were a necessary buffer, a ring of defense against further French incursions onto English soil. From a religious viewpoint, the safety of New England rested in extending the protection of God to the "valley of Achor." It is not surprising then that the crisis atmosphere of these years provided opportunity for a third and less dramatic form of heroism.

Some women, especially aged and pious widows, became known for their courage in simply staying put, in refusing to leave their wilderness homes despite the entreaties of friends or relatives.

According to Cotton Mather, Mrs. Elizabeth Heard was miraculously preserved in the Dover Massacre of 1689. She witnessed scenes of desolation which might have overcome a lesser person, but she did not abandon her home in the long war which followed. "This Gentlewoman's Garrison was the most Extreame Frontier of the Providence, and more Obnoxious than any other, and more incapable of Relief; nevertheless, by her presence and courage, it held out all the War, even for Ten Years together," he wrote, adding that she resisted the offers of her friends to remove to safety in Portsmouth, "which would have been a Damage to the Town and Land." [52]

Other Bostonians admired the tenacity of frontier women. In 1710, Samuel Sewall of Boston wrote to Elizabeth Saltonstall of Haverhill, who had recently been widowed, praising her for "the Obligation you lay even upon the Province, by denying your self, and continuing to live in a Frontier Town." In Sewall's view, Mrs. Saltonstall's service to the Commonwealth was twofold; he admired both her courage and her piety. As he phrased it, her heroism consisted in "venturing to keep Watch and Ward for the Inward Towns." [53] In his letter, Sewall mentioned enclosing

a book "as a small Token of my Respect." He did not give the title, though it may well have been one of the sermons or discourses for women which Cotton Mather was printing so frequently in these years. Women of the frontier perhaps read as well as inspired the public praise extended to their sex in the first years of the eighteenth century.

* * *

In a funeral sermon preached in 1728 for Katharin Willard, the wife of Massachusetts provincial secretary, Mather included a generalized paean to New England women. "There have been, and thro' the Grace of our God there still are, to be found, in many parts of these American Regions, and even in the Cottages of the Wilderness, as well as in our Capital City, those Handmaids of the Lord, who tho' they ly very much Conceal'd from the World, and may be called, The Hidden Ones, yet have no little share in the Beauty and the Defence of the Land." [54] Mather was perhaps thinking of the many women he had praised over the past thirty years in his histories of the Indian wars, the assertive viragoes who physically assaulted the enemy; the pious captives who made a trek to Canada a religious quest, and especially the godly widows whose homes were a barrier to enemy attack and whose presence provided spiritual insurance of God's care. Hannah Duston of Haverhill, Hannah Swarton of Casco Bay, and Elizabeth Heard of Cochecho served in different ways, but in

Mather's view each woman was a defender of Zion.

If frontier conditions nurtured female self-reliance, they also provided an arena for exemplary godliness. Wilderness courage and protestant piety were both important ingredients in the myth of frontier heroism which was born in the narratives of King Philip's War and nurtured in the ministerial histories which followed. In real life, the relationship between heroism and religion was far more complex. On closer examination, Hannah Duston's aggression was linked less to a militant Puritanism than to a violent underside in the village culture of New England; Swarton's resistance to the Catholicism was less striking than the capitulation of other captives; while Heard's home-bound piety, though less spectacular than either, had a greater significance in the long range history of New England, a significance not discovered in ministerial narratives, however, but in close examination of female roles in the religious development of the region.

1. Humiliations follow'd with Deliverances (Boston, 1697), and Decennium Luctuosum (Boston, 1699).
2. "Journal of the Rev. John Pike," Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society, III (Concord, 1832), p. 48.
3. Throughout I have used the version of Duston's story which appears in Magnalia Christi Americana (Boston, 1702), Book VII. In the Magnalia Mather simply reprinted the story he had told in the two earlier publications. I have used the edition published in New Haven, 1820, hereafter cited as Magnalia.
4. The Diary of Samuel Sewall 1674-1729, ed. M. Halsey Thomas (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1973), I, 372; George Wingate Chase, The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts, From Its First Settlement, In 1640, To The Year 1860 (Haverhill, 1861), p. 191.
5. Magnalia, p. 551.
6. Magnalia, pp. 550-551.
7. C. Mather, Humiliation, p. 47.
8. David D. Hall, The Faithful Shepherd, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974) pp. 260-264, and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," American Quarterly (Spring 1976), pp. 20-40.
9. Keith Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects," in Crisis In Europe, ed. Trevor Aston (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967) pp. 332-357; and William H. Chafe, The American Woman. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), Part Two.
10. Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Markble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Deni. (New York and Toronto: Signet, 1961) p. 39.

11. Hawthorne, Marble Faun, p- 40.
12. Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York, ed. Barbara Miller Solomon (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 297-298.
13. Dwight, p. 299.
14. Dwight, p. 299.
15. from the American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge (May 1836) II, 397, quoted in Kathryn Whitford, "Hannah Duston: The Judgement of History," Essex Institute Historical Collections, 108 (1972) pp. 318. Whitford's article has a useful survey of nineteenth-century treatments of Duston, including those by Whittier and Thoreau.
16. George Wingate Chase, The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts, p- 186.
17. Douglas E. Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966) is a general account of this war. See also Alden T. Vaughan, New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians 1620-1675 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1965), pp. 319-20; and for a concise summary, Gary B. Nash Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974) - pp. 123-127.
18. Vaughan, Frontier, pp. 309-310; Neal Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," WMQ, Third Series, XXXI, 54.
19. Increase Mather, Brief History, p. 25.
20. William Hubbard, "A Narrative of the Troubles With the Indians in New-England, From Pascataqua to Penmaquid," in A Narrative of the Troubles, p. 46.

21. "Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, 1682," in Charles H. Lincoln, ed. Narratives of the Indian Wars 1675-1699, (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1913), p. 128.
22. Hubbard, A Narrative of the Troubles, p. 61, 77; "Piscataqua," 15; Elizabeth Hanson, God's Mercy Surmounting Man's Cruelty, (Philadelphia, 1728), pp. 35-36; Cotton Mather, Good Fetch'd Out of Evil, (Boston, 1700), pp. 33-34.
23. I. Mather, Brief History, p. 6.
24. "Captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," p. 130-131; Douglas Leach, "The 'Whens' of Mary Rowlandson's Captivity," New England Quarterly 34 (September, 1960), pp. 352-363 for a general account of geography.
25. Hubbard, "Pascataqua," pp. 32-33.
26. Hubbard, "Pascataqua," pp. 20-21.
27. I. Mather, Brief History, p. 120.
28. Hubbard, "Pascataqua," p. 43.
29. Douglas Edward Leach, "Mary White Rowlandson," in Notable American Women 1607-1950, ed. Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), III, 200; "Captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," p. 137.
30. William Willis, The History of Portland (1865, repr. New Hampshire Publishing Company and Maine Historical Society, 1972), pp. 45, 50, 101.
31. "Captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," p. 119.

32. Letter from Thaddeus Clark to Mrs. Elizabeth Harvy, 14 August 1676, in Emma Lewis Coleman, New England Captives Carried to Canada (Portland, Maine: The Southworth Press, 1925), I, 210.
33. Douglas Leach, Arms for Empire (New York: the Macmillan Company, 1973), p. 80-115 passim.
34. Ulrich, "Vertuous Women," passim; and William Andrews, "The Printed Funeral Sermons of Cotton Mather," Early American Literature, 5 (Fall 1970), pp. 24-44.
35. C. Mather, Decennium, p. 237.
36. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New-Hampshire (Philadelphia, 1784) I, 338-9. Belknap says CR stories collected from aged persons by John Smith, Esq a descendant of one of the suffering families.
37. Belknap, I, 357.
38. Nicholas Perryman Ledger, Exeter, NH, 1723-1754, MS, New Hampshire Historical Society, p. 7.
39. Samuel Penhallow, The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians (Boston, 1726; repr. NHHS Collections, 1824, 1871) I, 107.
40. Penhallow, P. 28; and Cotton Mather, Good Fetch'd Out of Evil (Boston, 1706) p. 38.
41. see for example the letter from Pendleton Fletcher, dated Sept. 8, 1721, CMeES, IX, 466.
42. (Philadelphia, 1728).
43. C. Mather, Frontiers Well-Defended (Boston, 1707), p. 4-5.

44. C. Mather, Duodecennium Iuctuosum (Boston, 1714), p- 8.
45. This statement is based on a count of captives listed in Emma Lewis Coleman, New England Captives Carried to Canada (Portland, Maine: The Southworth Press, 1925). See chapter eleven.
46. "A Narrative of Hannah Swarton," in C. Mather, Humiliations follow'd with Deliverances (Boston, 1697), p. 55.
47. John Gyles, Memoirs of Odd Adventures (Boston, 1736), p. 4.
48. Swarton, p. 68.
49. Gyles, p. 4.
50. Gyles, p. 4.
51. Gyles, p. 34.
52. C. Mather, Decennium, p. 198-199. Mather said he received his information from Mr. John Pike, the minister at Dover. Pike did flee to safety, living in Portsmouth during much of the war
53. "Letter-Book of Samuel Sewall," CMHS Sixth Series (Boston: 1886) I, 394.
54. C. Mather, El Shaddai (Boston, 1725), p. 21.

Chapter Ten

Virages

Boston's North Church, April 1697. Cotton Mather is in the pulpit concluding a sermon on the humiliations which must precede conversion. He pauses, the looks toward the woman's side of the meeting house where a housewife from Haverhill sits silent in her best gown and hood. Mather begs his congregation to permit a digression, for before his very eyes is a woman who has known the real humiliation of a frightening captivity among savages. If God could deliver her from an enemy so terrible, surely He might deliver a repentant soul from the greater bondage of sin. Though fainting and weary, still recovering from the birth of a child, God had sustained Hannah Duston in the wilderness and given her the courage to slay her captors. Her deliverance was an emblem for all New England.[1]

Did Hannah look at the pulpit or at her hands as Mather spoke? As she sat in his church that spring morning and heard him "Publickly & Solemnly" and with all his authority

as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ call upon her "to make a Right use of the Deliverance, wherewith He has Highly favoured you," did she think of her sister Elizabeth? Did Mather? Did he remember that other sermon he had preached just four years before? In that age so conscious of family, surely he or someone else in the congregation must have realized that Hannah Duston, the Indian fighter, and Elizabeth Emerson, the condemned murderer, were sisters. Yet no commentator, from the seventeenth century to the present, has ever linked their two stories.[2] In 1693 a jury convicted Elizabeth Emerson of killing her twin babies at birth. Though she denied it, no witness appeared in her favor. IN 1697 her sister Hannah confessed to killing ten sleeping Indians and was proclaimed a saviour of New England. Not for a hundred years would anyone question her motivation or her behavior. The infamy of Elizabeth casts an unexpected light on the fame of Hannah, forcing us to place "heroism" within the wider context of violent behavior.

Hannah Duston and Elizabeth Emerson were both unusual. In their society, as in every other for which information is available, females were less disposed to physical aggression than males.[3] In Essex County in the last years of the seventeenth century, women were assailants in fewer than twenty percent of court cases involving some form of violent

behavior.[4] Yet a closer examination of court records from the region suggests that their behavior, though unusual, was unusual in patterned ways. If most women did not use physical force, a significant and highly visible minority did. The two sisters touch opposite margins of a larger fabric of female violence in northern New England.

Colonial Americans would never have focused upon a quality such as "violence" in the way we are doing here. For them there could be no real connection between Hannah Duston and Elizabeth Emerson because they performed in radically different settings. Role was more significant than personality. Some of their contemporaries certainly knew the family connection, but they would not have drawn from it the same significance as would a twentieth-century psychologist or for that matter a nineteenth-century romantic like Hawthorne. This is because premodern Americans did not always draw firm connections between external behavior and intrinsic character. Certain patterns of behavior could be put on and taken off according to circumstances without altering the essential nature of the person; women could act as "deputy husbands," for example, or men as "brides of Christ" without becoming any less "submissive" or "masterful" in other social relations. A psychologist might look for developmental patterns in the Emerson family, a romanticist for some dark secret which

might explain a common flaw. Colonial Americans were interested in neither. To understand their perceptions of Hannah Duston and Elizabeth Emerson we must search for the roles they filled.

War and infanticide, the most public and the most private of violent acts, describe two extremes of a far more common response to human stress. Violence can be defined as any physical assault upon a person or property. In northern New England, a number of almost ordinary vignettes typified the normal range of violent behavior--a master beating his servant, a woman throwing stones at a neighbor's hog, a crowd of young troopers fighting in a tavern, one man tearing down another man's fence. Each incident was defined by the position of the assailant and the victim in a hierarchy of social relations.

Authoritarian violence was employed by a superior to enforce obedience by an inferior--the servant had hidden when it was time to rake hay.

Defensive violence involved direct action against a perceived trespass--the hog had gotten through the fence and was rooting in the corn.

Disorderly violence, often associated with drinking, had no immediately visible objective, yet almost always involved an audience and a bid for attention. It both defined and made bearable the position of an inferior in the

underlying order which it attacked--training day had been hard and hot and the rewards few; it was time to let off steam.

Demonstrative violence involved a premeditated assault on authority in an effort to witness an injustice--the fence stood on disputed land.

In colonial America, the first two types of violence were seen positively as well as negatively. The essential question was not whether the master had the right to strike the servant of the woman to drive off the pig, but whether the violence used was excessive and whether other more peaceful means had been available. Here the issue was abuse of rather than disobedience to authority. The last two types of violence clearly stood beyond the bounds of law, but even here the aggressor respected the very bounds he violated. If there had been no law against fighting in the tavern, nor a procription against tearing down fences, the aggression would have been without social meaning. All four types come close to what Emanuel Marx has called "social violence," that is aggressive behavior by ordinary persons for more or less clearly understood ends-[5]

In contrast, anti-social violence signalled the aggressor's alienation from the community. Murder or suicide destroyed the social bond rather than simply trying to contain or enlarge it. Such a typology will not explain

the origins of violence, but it will help us to see something of its range. A closer examination of each type reveals certain clearly established female roles.

From the whipping post on the town common to the pudding stick in the hand of a mother, colonial Americans accepted authoritarian violence as essential to social order. The most extreme forms of violence were monopolized by the state, which had the power to kill as well as to whip, but masters, mistresses, schoolmasters, and parents not only had the right but the obligation to administer physical correction if needed. As Anne Bradstreet put it, "some children (like sowe land) are of so tough and morose a dispo[sition], that the plough of correction must make long furrows on their back, and the Harrow of discipline goe often over them, before they bee fit soile to sow the seed of morality, much lesse of grace in them." [6] Though wife beating was technically illegal, it too was at least tacitly condoned by the society. [7] In litigation, the issue was not the right of the superior to use force, but the appropriateness of its administration. Presented with evidence of a bruised limb or a broken head, the court tended to ask: Did the citizen resist the constable? Was the child or the servant incorrigible? Did the wife provoke the husband?

When neighbors tried to present Elizabeth Woodbury for striking Elizabeth Heriden, Heriden admitted that she had "never struck her but two blows in her life, and those might have been given to a child of two years." [8] As the weakest members in the social order, children were probably the most frequent victims of authoritarian violence, though their stories seldom reached the court. Servants account for the largest number of cases, probably because the family bond which often seals even abused family members to silence, was missing. Some New England women were fully capable of hurting their servants. In 1666, Judith Weeks of Kittery was "bound over...to answer her Confession for Cuttin off her servant Nicholas Woodmans toes." [9] The record does not tell whether her blade accidentally met his bare foot while they were grubbing roots or chopping wood or whether she had deliberately countered a threat to run away with one swift and fatal stroke. Yet, for whatever motivation, female violence of this sort seems to have been unusual. In dealing with servants, as well as with their own children, women were expected to moderate male authority. When Thomas Bettis was presented for running away, he explained that life had become more difficult since his master remarried. His first dame used to intervene in his favor, but the new wife only set her husband on. [10] In this case, the violence of the wife was verbal rather than direct. The husband did

the beating.

Weakness, rather than gentleness, was the perceived difference here. When Thomas Maule and his wife were presented, their servant Jean Sullivan explained that the master used a horse whip, the mistress simply thumped her and turned her out of doors.[11] Less effective at applying blows, women became even more adept at lashing with their tongues. In the autumn of 1671, Mistress Sarah Morgan of Kittery stood with a gag in her mouth half an hour during public meeting for "strikeing of her husband." [12] The blurring of physical and verbal violence apparent in this punishment suggests that in some minds they were hardly separate. Over and over again, court records demonstrate a link between violent words and violent acts. An abusive wife might get--and deserve--a blow.

This may help to explain why some victims of authoritarian violence failed to press charges even after fleeing to their neighbors for help. Elizabeth Ela ran to William White's house crying that her husband had beaten her and threatened her with a knife. "Alasse, poore woman, I am sorry for you," White said. "Sorry," said she, "if you will not entertaine mee & lett mee abide in ycr house I will lie in the street in the snow & if I perish, my blood be upon yor head." Other neighbors testified of Goodman Ela's ill temper and his wife's desperation, but when the case came to

court, Elizabeth meekly recanted. If she had "spoke Agenste him: Abowghte his barbarose usage toward me" it had all been in a passion. "I have nothings Agenst my husband to charge him with." [13]

Guilt as much as fear may have motivated the recantations. Since childhood, colonial Americans had learned that submissiveness to authority and careful attention to duty were the best assurance of good treatment. If their parents or their master beat them, they had probably deserved it. Most assaults upon women seem to have been provoked by some sort of challenge to male authority--a widow questioned her son's distribution of resources, a wife refused to feed the pigs or fetch a scyth from the field or she undermined her husband in front of his friends. Robert Holmes quietly described his own situation: "I Being about to corak von of my children my wife indefring to take it awaye and some words she gafe me that stord up my anger and i gafe her several Blows." [14] He was not an evil man; he just didn't like to be questioned, especially in front of a neighbor. Magistrates could not condone such behavior; but they could understand it. For wives and widows, as well as for servants and children, submissiveness was the best protection.

In defensive violence, however, wives were in a far more favorable position. As deputy husbands, they could protect their families or property against an intruder, using any means at their disposal--stones, sticks, or pots of boiling water. Some women proved themselves powerful defenders. When Nathaniel Keen complained of Joanna Williams for striking him with a club, she insisted she acted in self-defense. There had been an argument over a boundary. Keene had come to her house while her husband was away, perhaps deliberately. Unable to get help from the neighbors, she had gone to the field, threatening to break his compass if he did not get off the land. Sarah Keen and Elizabeth Hammans, who saw the whole encounter from a distance, described it in court as a kind of slow motion pantomime.

and as she ströck him we saw him fall as
he was running from her and She also
fell and then they got both up & said
Keen went from her and She followed him
bending of her fist as if she threatened
him but the wind blowing, we could only
hear her voyce but could not understand
what She Said.[15]

Joanna was acquitted.

Trespass is the key motif in most such records. Often the immediate provocation was a runaway pig or cow, though specific encounters often reach back to a long pattern of neighborly conflict involving husbands, wives, and children in various combinations. When Robert Potter tried to take

several of Mr. John Hathorne's shoats to the pound, Hathorne struck him with a barrel stave while Mistress Hathorne and their children scratched him and pulled his hair. When Goody Potter joined the fray, Hathorne hit her with a board.[16] A few years later, Hathorne was on the receiving end in a similar conflict. When he tried to seize calves and hogs won in an attachment, John Gifford struck him with the stale of a rake and Mistress Gifford bit him on the back of the hand.[17]

Biting and hair pulling were frequently employed by women against male aggressors perhaps because they administered considerable pain without a great deal of force. Hair pulling had symbolical significance in male-female encounters, since most women keep their own hair tucked under a coif or cap and only men let their hair hang free. As witchcraft lore shows, hair (like nail parings or urine) was perceived as an extension of the person and might have magical potential as well. This may help to explain the curious behavior of Mary Tucker. When Leonard Belringer came to her house and asked for a drink, she said he didn't need it and threw him out. Then she followed him to the yard, grabbed him by the hair, and pulled him to the ground, beating his head upon the paving stones until her maid ran for help, fearing she would kill him. One witness saw Mary pull Belringer's hair out and shove some of it in her

pocket. When told that was not a Christian thing to do, she flung it away.[18] Would the hair give her additional power over her victim--or was she simply taking a trophy like Hannah Duston?

A woman like Mary Tucker pushed beyond defensive toward disorderly violence. She may have been licensed to sell ale or cider. Belringer was perhaps a frequent and troublesome customer. After a hard day, she may have been incapable of dealing with his provocations. But none of this explains the extremity of her behavior. She was so out-of-control that even her maid had to intervene, reversing roles for a time with her mistress. Disorderly violence was especially disturbing to observers because it appeared uncontrolled, random, and unprovoked. One man might be sitting "peaceably and quietly by the fire" when another came staggering through the door, struck him, and pulled him into the street.[19]

For males, disorderly violence was often employed to assert or reinforce status within a group. The evening after a military muster or the first night ashore after a fishing expedition were frequent settings. Small resentments or subtle affronts to individual dignity, suppressed in the discipline of training and work, might break out at nightfall especially under the influence of alcohol.[20] For women, communal enterprise does not seem to

have provoked direct aggression, perhaps because group work was more casual and less tightly disciplined, but also because it was often focused on the care of the sick or newborn. There is one fascinating, though somewhat obscure incident, in the New Hampshire court records, however. A number of married women were sleeping at the house of Walter Abbott, perhaps taking turns watching during an illness or lying-in, when a disturbance erupted in an outer room. Ann Jones clambered out of bed in time to see Alice Cate and Sarah Abbott down on the floor, both of them bloody. "She hav a most bit of my thun," Abbot screamed. Perhaps too much beer and a chance remark by Sarah Abbott had unleashed her uncontrollable rage. Ann Elliot later testified that she had to "thrust her the said Allies Down before she this Deponent could part them & get her thumb out of her mouth." Alice Cate could only sob that Goody Abbot was the cause of her losing her child.[21]

Looking at the overall sample of court cases from Essex County suggests a different and somewhat more surprising pattern, however. Although male aggressors attacked other men in seventy percent of cases in which they were involved, the much smaller number of female aggressors attacked men equally as often as they attacked other women.[22] Male violence was apparently sex-linked; female violence was not. Although women were less disposed to use physical force than

men, when they did they broke through a powerful gender barrier. Violent men were still men; violent women became superwomen, amazons, viragoes. Bawdry frequently combined with physical aggression in depictions regarding female disorder, suggesting that such women derived their terrifying strength by combining male aggressiveness with the force of female sexuality.

A woman like Elizabeth Fanning both fascinated and horrified her neighbors. A whipping was little deterrent to her "opprobrious, vile carriages." She threw a brick at Henry Luke and went after John Ally with a hatchet, forcing him to leap over a fence for fear of his life. She had even been seen beating her husband, but when he broke his leg, she came to him in a mockingly seductive manner and said, "O pore ould roge, is they leage broke i will leke it hole." [23] In their outrageous behavior, such women compressed two forms of disorder, sex and violence. Surely this is an underlying and perhaps unconscious meaning of the myth of Jael: "He asked water, and she gave him milk, she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. . . . She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer: and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head."

Demonstrative violence witnessed an injustice. Through an assault upon a person or property it appealed to a higher authority, to a court, to the neighborhood, or only to some

more exalted sense of justice. On a Monday morning in May of 1674, a widow named Jcane Furson, with three married daughters and two of their children, went into a cornfield belonging to Richard Cummings of Portsmouth and began pulling up the new shoots. Neighbors quickly gathered around, amazed and puzzled by what they saw. Though some tried to persuade them to quit, the women continued their work, saying they would set up a wigwam in the field and stay all night. "Is this the way to get your rights?" John Fletcher asked. "Yea," the women answered, "Mr. Comings will not come to speake with us wee desire that he would sue us." [24]

Years before, Cummings had been involved with the widow Furson's first husband in the purchase of land. She was certain that her share had never been sold or conveyed, yet Cummings had refused to lister to her grievance, having sent her a twenty shilling payment as dower. She and her daughters were convinced that they deserved more and that a direct assault on Cummings land was the best--and the cheapest--way to advertize their claim. "Mr. Comins may doe what he please but wee cannot have Justice for wee have not fatt hoggs & shoulders of mutton & pockets full of money as mr. Comins has to fee great men with," they said. Their dramatic action did bring a suit, though with quite different results than they had expected. The magistrates

were far less interested in Furson's claims to the land than in the flagrant destruction of the corn. She and her daughters' husbands were forced to pay the full value of the harvest which the newly planted corn might have yielded, as well as the fees of the court.[25]

Though unsuccessful, Joane Furson's assault on Cummings' corn illustrated the essential features of demonstrative violence. As in disorderly violence, a conscious violation of role boundaries played an important part. The widow's aggression highlighted both her weakness in relation to Cummings and her determination. The stance of the men in her family is particularly interesting here. According to the witnesses, her daughters' husbands stood in the field the whole time, neither helping nor trying to stop the women. "Doe you allow of the womens pulling up the corne?" one neighbor asked. The sons neither accepted nor denied responsibility. "Lett the women doe what they please wee will stand by them in it," they answered. When Cummings sued, Widow Furson humbly beseeched the court to lay all of the blame upon her. The whole thing had been her idea, she insisted, and her daughters just happened to be with her when she decided to pull up the corn. Unfortunately the presence of the men in the field made it impossible for them to deny their involvement.[26] The fact that they remained aloof from the actual violence, however, is in itself

significant.

Drunkenness or passion might excuse disorderly violence, but a deliberate and premeditated assault upon authority was more difficult to explain. Numbers often provided some safety. Half a dozen outraged farmers pouring out their corn in the constable's yard made the point much more effectively than one--next time the constable would be on time at the landing to collect the county tax.[27] Role inversion was an even more effective strategy. In implementing demonstrative violence, women had several clear advantages. Because only a deeply felt outrage could call forth feminine aggression, the demonstrative power of the act was increased; because women were presumably weaker than men, the resistance which they met might be less; and finally, because women were by nature less stable, more easily misled or beguiled, their husbands could pass the whole thing off as a momentary lapse of patriarchal control. Wives could act out a rebellion which men might formally deny. Is it mere coincidence that wives so frequently tangled with constables come to collect taxes?[28]

The most dramatic (and certainly the bloodiest) incident of demonstrative violence in northern New England was implemented by a group of Marblehead wives at sunset on a sabbath evening in July of 1677 just at the end of Metacom's Rebellion. Although the war had wound down in the

south, a related conflict had broken out in Maine where Abenaki Indians had begun to attack Essex County fishing vessels. When a group of local fishermen who had escaped from their captors came into the harbour bringing two Abenaki prisoners with them, a crowd rushed to the waterside, demanding why they left the Indians alive. The men answered that they had lost all they had in the attack and hoped to realize something from their captives, that they intended to take them to the constable so that "they might be answerable to the court at Boston." But as they came ashore:

the whole town flocked about them, beginning at first to insult them, and soon after, the women surrounded them, drove them by force from them, (we escaping at no little peril,) and laid violent hands upon the captives, some stoning us in the meantime, because we would protect them, others seizing them by the hair, got full possession of them, nor was there any way left by which we could rescue them. Then with stones, billets of wood, and what else they might, they made an end of these Indians. We were kept at such distance that we could not see them till they were dead, and then we found them with their heads off and gone, and their flesh in a manner pulled from their bones. And such was the tumultation these women made, that for my life I could not tell who these women were, or the names of any of them.[29]

There is a strong suggestion that the women acted as surrogates for the larger community, since no one in that small town was willing to identify or prosecute them. Their violence was demonstrative, directed at the perceived lenience of the magistrates in Boston as well as against the

Indians themselves, but in murdering the two Abenaki braves they called upon the even more powerful persona of the disorderly woman. So immense was their rage that no authority could contain them. Boasting that they might kill "forty of the best Indians in the country," they symbolically restored the potency of a frightened and desperate community.

This was not "frontier vigilantism" as one historian has suggested, but an American version of an old world pattern. Natalie Davis has demonstrated that from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, the image of the "disorderly woman" sanctioned riot and political disobedience in England. Women were directly involved and even led some of these demonstrations. In others, male leaders assumed female disguise, blacking their faces and putting on women's clothing. Female disguise had both practical and symbolic value. Petticoats and soot were available in almost every house. More important than that, however, such disguise "freed men from full responsibility for their deeds and perhaps, too, from fear of outrageous revenge upon their manhood. After all, it was mere women who were acting in this disorderly way." [30]

The use of disguises in mob violence is a familiar pattern in later American history--patriots disguised as Indians dumped tea into the harbor in Boston, vigilantes

with their faces blackened like slaves rid their community of undesirables. The use of female disguise has not been studied, though there is one fragmentary but fascinating example from our time and place. On September 1, 1719, John Roberts, deputy sheriff of Exeter attempted to serve a writ on Richard Hilton and was greeted in time-honored New England manner. Mr. Hilton seized Roberts by the throat "so hard that he was like to have choaked him." Mrs. Hilton "furiously assaulted him," pulled him by the hair, grabbed his writ, and tore it. Two days later, Roberts returned with reinforcements and an arrest warrant, but when he approached the house he saw what appeared to be thirty or forty persons inside, some of the men "in womens Cloaths & others with their faces smuted as black as Negroes." [31] The yeoman of Exeter, like their counterparts in England a hundred years before, knew the power of female identity in demonstrative violence.

Thus, Hannah Duston's heroism belongs to a much larger tradition of violence in northern New England. Raising her hatchet, she defended herself and her companions against a dangerous assailant, enlarging the quite commonplace role of a wife as deputy-husband and defender, but the public meaning of her act, overtly tied to religious themes in Cotton Mather's accounts, reached toward a much deeper tradition of disorderly and demonstrative violence in both

England and America. As an Amazon, she transcended feminine roles without departing from them.

What then of Eliabeth? Hannah's sister was one of eleven persons executed for murder in Massachusetts between 1630 and 1692. Four of those convicted murderers were women, three of the four had killed their own children.[32] At the end of the seventeenth century, New England ministers became alarmed at what they perceived as a growing crime. In 1693, Cotton Mather observed that there had been "Six or Seven such unhappy Instances, that are upon Record, and made Pillars of Salt in Printed Memorials." [33] The women of these "Printed Memorials" were almost always servants, women on the fringes of New England society, often Irish, Indian, or Black, the very persons who would have been most likely to have been beaten and abused themselves. The crime of infanticide has had a complicated history. In medieval England, it was not considered homicide at all, but was a lesser crime punished by the church courts, which did not distinguish it from induced abortion. By the seventeenth century in Old England as in New, infanticide had not only become a capital crime, but a crime of the weakest and most desperate of women.[34] It was also a difficult crime to prove, since newborn infants were notoriously fragile. Had there been malice? Neglect? Or simply little breath in the child to begin with? After 1692, the colonial laws were

revised to make "concealing the death of a bastard child" punishable by death-[35] In the context of contemporary attitudes toward childbearing, infanticide was not just a coverup for sexual misbehavior, it signalled a rejection of the entire social and human order. To fail to call the midwives placed a woman outside the community; to become "the butcher of her own bowels" gave the crime an almost suicidal dimension as well.

Yet curiously, the printed memorials of convicted murderesses show a strenuous effort on the part of the religious community to bring these women back into the circle of human society. God might redeem even the most despicable of his children, but only if they acknowledged their rebelliousness, their disobedience, their depravity, only that is if they absolved society of any responsibility for their desperation. In her confession, taken down in 1735 by York's minister, Samuel Moody, an Indian servant named Patience Boston admitted to having had murderous feelings toward her baby "when I perceived it's crying, and it's taking up my time to tend it, caused some Uneasiness in the Family." When it died two months later, she felt herself a murderer. Patience's long confession is an almost excruciating account of deprivation and rage, a rage which she finally turned inward, becoming a notorious self-accuser. She was finally executed for pushing her

master's eight-year-old child into a well. "I would have killed my Master myself, if I could have done it," she told Moody, adding that when she saw that the boy was dead, "I lifted up my Hands with my Eyes towards Heaven, speaking after this manner, Now am I guilty of Murder indeed." [34]

Elizabeth Emerson was not a servant, but she was an unwed mother who not only failed to call the midwives but concealed the deaths of her babies as well. She was the fifth (and Hannah Duston the oldest) of the fifteen children of Michael and Hannah Emerson of Haverhill. Her father, a farmer and shoemaker and occasional grandjuryman, had been an early settler of the town. Her mother, the daughter of a baker and the stepdaughter of a miller, had spent her early years in Ipswich and Newbury. Except for the unexpected heroism of one daughter--and the equally spectacular device of another--we would know the Emersons as common folk, hard-working, sturdy, and no more or less visible in local records than most of their neighbors. When Michael Emerson died in 1709, in confident hope of "a glorias Resurrection," he left land to his sons, moveables to his wife, and "the sum of twenty pounds" to Hannah and her sister Abigail. [35] Elizabeth, of course, was long dead and perhaps forgotten.

When Elizabeth was born in January of 1665, Hannah was eight, Mary was five, John was almost four, and the baby Samuel not quite two. She was eleven when Hannah married

and perhaps there was special feeling between the two. Hannah named her first baby for her mother (and herself), but the second for Elizabeth. By this time, Elizabeth was rapidly growing up in a house filled with siblings and marked by recurring seasons of travail and loss. She saw nine younger children born to her mother, five of whom died. None of this was unusual in New England, but something in Elizabeth's personal experience made it different. Perhaps she began in early childhood to press a little harder for her parents' attention than most, arousing first the annoyance and then the anger of her father. "I was always of an Haughty and Stubborn spirit," she later confessed.[36]

In the spring of 1676, when Elizabeth was ten, Michael Emerson made his one and only appearance in Essex County Court as a defendant. With some reluctance perhaps, since he was then serving as juryman from Haverhill, the magistrates fined him "for cruel and excessive beating of his daughter with a flail swingle and for kicking her." [37] Note the word "excessive." Elizabeth, unlike other children in the family, may have responded to her father's first whippings with open defiance rather than obedient submission, her resistance fueling his anger, and his anger reinforcing her resistance, until he had finally passed the line drawn in this society between godly sternness and cruelty. Six months later the court abated his fine and

released him from the bond of good behavior.[38]

As she entered her teens, Elizabeth's rebellion took another form. She began to keep "bad company" and was by her own confession led to the "sin of uncleanness," and eventually became pregnant. Like many girls before her, she might have married hastily, faced the condemnation of church and court, and gone on to live a respectable life. But when she accused Timothy Swan of getting her with child, her reputation in Haverhill was too poor to make the charges stick. Swan's father told the justice of peace, Nathaniel Saltonstall, that he had charged his son "not to go into that wicked house and his son had obeyed and furthermore his son could not abide the jade." [39] Wicked house--the phrase sticks in the mind but cannot be precisely defined. Did it refer only to Elizabeth or did it extend to her father? In April, Elizabeth gave birth to a daughter, named Dorothea (perhaps defiantly) after Timothy Swan's older sister.[40]

For the next five years, she continued to live at home as "Elizabeth Emerson singlewoman," perhaps keeping her little daughter in her parents' house. If she ever regained her maidenly figure after the first pregnancy, she soon lost it, putting on so much weight that by the winter of 1691, though the neighbors suspected she was with child, they could not be sure. When her mother finally queried her, she denied it, though some alert women in the neighborhood

obviously kept close watch. The timing might have been coincidental, but it was exact. On the morning of May 10, 1691, a sabbath, under warrant from Major Saltonstall, two men of the town with Hannah Browne, Judeth Webster, Goodwife Hannah Swan, and widow Mary Neff came to the Emerson house while Elizabeth's parents were at public meeting. That they would come on Sunday suggests that they were alarmed. That they would come while the Emersons were away suggests that they expected opposition, though we cannot be certain.

They found Elizabeth washing dishes but looking "very ill." While the women took her into the chamber to search her condition, the men went to the garden. There they found two little bodies sewn up in a bag and buried in a shallow grave. The women were not sure whether the babies had been born dead or alive. One of them had its umbilical cord twisted about its neck and one "of its hands clapt upon the same," but "wheather itt were a willful act of murder by the mother or any Else. . . we do certainly believe that the children perished for want of help & caer att time of travell." [41] Curiously, one of the women who examined Elizabeth that day was the very same Mary Neff who would accompany her sister Hannah into the wilderness and return with her to Boston with ten Indian scalps.

What exactly had happened in that "wicked house" in Haverhill? The next day Elizabeth told her story to an unknown official (perhaps Nathaniel Saltonstall) as she lay on her bed in her parents' house. Her tale, recorded in the clipped responses of the formal examination, etches the desolation which awaited a young woman who could neither submit or escape. The setting itself, a trundle bed at her parents' feet, speaks eloquently of Elizabeth's dependence and of the desperate need of the parents to control this puzzling and wayward daughter.

Q: What is yor Husband's name?

A: I have never an one.

Q: Were you ever married?

A: No: never.

Q: Have you not been a second time Delivered, & had Two Children or Twins this month?

A: Yea, I have.

Q: When were they born?

A: On Thursday night last, before day toward Friday morning. But I am not certain of the time of the night.

Q: Where were they born?

A: On the bed at my Fathers bed fcct, where I now am.

Q: Did you call for help in yor travel?

A: No: There was no body to call but my Father & Mother, & I was afraid to call my Mother for fear of killing her.

Q: Did you acquaint your Father or Mother with it afterwards?

A: No, not a Word: I was afraid.

Fearful of hurting her mother and perhaps simply fearful of

her father, she gave birth silently on a trundle bed at their feet, gagging her own pain with the greater fear of discovery. She insisted that neither child cried at birth.

Q: Did you not do them to death, by violence, sitting down upon them, smothering them, or by any other means?

A: No: by no means.

Q: Where did you hide them before buried?

A: In the chest there; by my bed.

The magistrate was incredulous. Elizabeth had simply hidden the babies and though weak had gone about her work as though nothing had happened.

Q: Who helpt you sow them up in the bag they were found in?

A: No body.

Q: When did you sow them up in the cloth they were buried in?

A: On Saturday night last.

Q: Where were your Father & Mother?

A: My Mother was gone to Milking & my Father was abroad.[42]

Though pressed by the examiner, Elizabeth's parents insisted they had not known that she was pregnant nor had they known of the birth or the burial.[43] Perhaps they simply refused to notice what at least some of their neighbors saw. Perhaps they were incapable of noticing. They were absolved in a preliminary hearing. Elizabeth was taken to Boston where she was tried by jury and on September 22, 1691 found guilty of murder.[44] On June 8, 1693 she was

hung, but not before sitting in Cotton Mather's church and listening to a sermon on the madness of sin. Mather begged Elizabeth to vomit all of her sins. "I Question whether ever any Prisoner in this World, enjoy's such means of Grace as you have done since your Imprisonment," he exclaimed, "and it may be there never was a Prisoner more Hard-Hearted, and more Untruthful." [45]

Still, though her repentance had been incomplete, she had left a last confession which Mather read for the edification of the youth of the congregation. A modern reader might reject the moral of Elizabeth's story without denying the validity of her conclusion: "I believe, the chief thing that hath, brought me, into my present Condition, is my Disobedience to my Parents: I despised all their Godly Counseils and Reproffs; and I was always of an Haughty and Stubborn Spirit. So that now I am become a dreadful Instance of the Curse of God belonging to Disobedient Children." [46]

In Elizabeth's story, a romanticist will certainly find the dark secret of the Emerson family and a psychologist the developmental pattern which will explain the heroism of her sister Hannah. A historian, on the other hand, can simply remind them both that early New Englanders would not have seen it that way at all.

1. Cotton Mather, Humiliaticns follow'd with Deliverances (Boston, 1697), ff. 42-48.
2. Charles Henry Pope, The Haverhill Emersons, (Boston: Murray and Emery, 1913), p. 21, hoped that the "mantle of charity" would cover Elizabeth's name.
3. Eleanor Emmons Maccoby and Carol Nagy Jacklin, The Psychology of Sex Differences (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974) pp. 243-247.
4. This statement is based upon a count of all court cases involving any form of physical assault in three volumes of the Essex County Court Records, Volume II (41 cases), Volume V (37 cases), and Volume VIII (30 cases). Females were assailants in 21 of 108 cases, victims in 34. Women in a working class section of London in the late nineteenth century committed 18 violent crimes for every 100 committed by men. Nancy Tomes, "A 'Torrent of Abuse': Crimes of Violence Between Working-Class Men and Women in London, 1840-1875," Journal of Social History, 11 (Spring 1978), p. 330.
5. Emmanuel Marx, The Social Context of Violent Behavior: A Social Anthropological Study in an Israeli Immigrant Town, (London, Henly, and Boston: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 96-99.
6. Anne Bradstreet, "Meditations," in The Works of Anne Bradstreet, ed. John Harvard Ellis, (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1962) p. 65.
7. All of the Quarterly Courts punished wife beaters, but they seldom allowed women to leave an abusive husband and, especially if there was any evidence of provocation, they were lenient. e.g. MPCR, II, 403, 460.; Essex Files, V, 377; New Hampshire State Papers, Vol. 30, pp. 20, 83, 166. See also, Nancy Cott, "Divorce and the Changing Status of Women in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," WMQ, Third Series, XXXIII, (October 1976), pp. 608-609.

8. Essex Files, III, 224-225.
9. MPCR, I, 262.
10. Essex Files, VII, 91.
11. Essex Files, VIII, 222-224.
12. MPCR, II, 224.
13. Essex Files, VIII, 272-273. Elderly mothers were sometimes victims of family violence and also accused and recanted their accusations. e.g. Essex Files, II, 443-446. For a similar case see, MPCR, VI, 9-11, 20. Again the son-in-law is admonished and eventually cleared.
14. Essex Files, V, 312.
15. MPCR, IV, 278, 281, 284, 285-287.
16. Essex Files, V, 59-60.
17. Essex Files, VI, 9. There are numerous examples of this sort of neighborly brawling. e.g. Essex Files, II, 50, 249; III, 32-34, 57-58, 274, 414; VIII, 97, 296; MPCR, IV, 91, 270-271, 111; VI, 64-66; New Hampshire Court Papers, I, part 1, 13-27; IX, 121.
18. Essex Files, VIII, 226-227.
19. Essex Files, VIII, 46, 65.
20. Essex Files, VIII, 181-183, a fight at a barn raising; Essex Files, VIII, 193-194, grievances accumulated during a fishing voyage; Essex Files, V, 31-33, trouble after training.

21. New Hampshire Court Papers, volume I, part 1, pp. 81, 91, 93. For identity of women, NLD, pp. 57-58, 132, 219, 387.
22. In the 108 cases described in note 4, men attacked other men in 66 of the 92 cases in which they were assailants. Women attacked other women in 10 cases, men in 10 cases, and both in 1. (The total number of assailants exceeds 108 because men and women acted together in several.)
23. Essex Files, VIII, 293.
24. New Hampshire Court Papers, III, 37.
25. New Hampshire Court Papers, III, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 141, 153, 155, 157, 161, 265, 267, 271, 273, 275, 279, 281.
26. New Hampshire Court Papers, III, 37, 149.
27. Essex Files, VIII, 212-213.
28. e.g. Essex Files, VII, 41; VIII, 18-22.
29. "The Vengeful Women of Marblehead: Robert Roules Deposition of 1677," ed. James Axtell, WMQ, XXXI (October 1974), pp. 650-652.
30. Natalie Davis, "Women on Top," in Society and Culture in Early Modern France, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 146-149.
31. New Hampshire Court Papers, File 17285, New Hampshire State Archives.
32. Edwin Powers, Crime and Punishment in Early Massachusetts, 1620-1692, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. 287-290.

33. Powers, Crime and Punishment, p. 307; Cotton Mather, Warnings from the Dead, (Boston 1693); A Sorrowful Spectacle, (Boston 1715); Samuel Willard, Impenitent Sinners, (Boston, 1698); John Rogers, Death the Certain Wages of Sin (Boston, 1709)
34. Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800, (New York, et al: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 473-474.
35. Powers, Crime and Punishment, p. 307.
36. Pope, Haverhill Emersons, 13-21; Mather, Warnings from the Dead, p. 71-72.
37. Essex Files, VI, 139, 141; Chase, Haverhill, p. 122.
38. Essex Files, VI, 212, 213.
39. Essex Files, IX, 603; Mather, Warnings from the Dead, 71-72.
40. Vital Records of Haverhill, Massachusetts, I, 113, 290-291.
41. Suffolk County Court Records, Early Files 2636, Suffolk County Court House, 92-96.
42. Examination of Elizabeth Emerson, May 11, 1691, Suffolk County, Early Files, 2636.
43. Examination of Michael Emerson, May 11, 1691; Examination of Hanna, the wife of Michael Emerson, May 11, 1691; Suffolk Court, Early Files, 2636.
44. Verdict of the Jury sitting in Boston, Suffolk Court, Early Files, 2636, p. 92; Saltonstall Papers, I, 203.

45. Cotton Mather, Warnings from the Dead, p- 72.

46. Cotton Mather, Warnings from the Dead, p. 71.

Chapter Eleven

Captives

Between 1689 and 1730 nearly three hundred women, men, and children were taken captive from northern New England. For frontier wives, the possibility of capture must have meant a contraction of boundaries in these years, an augmented fear of going to the well after dark or of sending children to a nearby wooded fringe to gather berries. But paradoxically, perhaps, the fact of capture might have meant an expansion. For those actually taken, new worlds both of terror and of possibility were opened. The captive described in the ministerial literature was invariably an innocent Christian seized by rude savages, then subjected to capricious taunts and torments which were mitigated only by Providential intervention. Captivity thus became a ritualistic journey of salvation, a passage through suffering and despair toward saving faith. In reality, captivity was sometimes a journey toward a new home, a new occupation, new friends and family, or at the very least toward earthly experiences little imagined in the farms and villages left behind.

Only by looking at all the known captives--those who escaped, those who returned, those who died, and those who stayed with the Indians or the French--can we understand the

significance of the dramatically visible heroines of the wartime literature. Because captivity was an extraordinary experience shared by ordinary men and women, it is worth exploring for another reason as well. Although cold, hunger, fear and forced contact with an enemy culture were experiences shared by captives of all ages and both sexes, captivity often took adults and children, females and males in different directions, illuminating role boundaries which might not be otherwise apparent.

* * *

Prisoners taken during the French and Indian wars are surprisingly visible in the records. Ministers wrote about them; negotiators counted them, and in court depositions and religious tracts they sometimes spoke for themselves. Nineteenth-century antiquarians added genealogical data and embellishment to these contemporary sources, sometimes, though not always, distinguishing between fact and legend. Early in this century, Alice Baker and Emma Coleman set out to collect all known information about New England captives taken to Canada, adding to the colonial documents and local traditions many baptismal and marriage records gleaned from Canadian archives. Building upon this information, it is possible to trace 270 captives taken from the region between 1689 and 1730.[1]

Like Hannah Duston, most prisoners were taken from their own houses in attacks involving several dwellings in their neighborhood if not an entire village. The towns of origin of the 270 captives place Mather's "valley of Achor" unmistakably in the region of New England north of Cape Ann. Sixteen of the recorded captives came from Hannah Duston's town of Haverhill and a few others from the Essex County towns of Newbury, Salisbury, and Amesbury. Almost all of the others came from the New Hampshire and Maine settlements north of the Merrimack. It is not surprising, given the massive assaults on York in 1692 and on Oyster River in 1694, that a fifth of the captives came from these two towns. With York, the towns along the Piscataqua River--Dover, Exeter, Oyster River, Kittery, and Salmon Falls--accounted for more than half. Twenty came from the more compact village of Wells, Maine, while the scattered plantations above Wells--Scarborough, Casco, Saco, Cape Elizabeth, Yarmouth, Femaquid--accounted for the remaining eighty.

James Axtell has suggested that in later wars, Indian captivity was primarily an experience of women and children.[2] In northern New England in these years, this was not so. Although unmarried girls and boys under the age of twenty-one accounted for two-thirds of the captives, this proportion was not much different than in the general

population. Among adults, fifty-two women appear on Coleman's lists and sixty men. The overall proportion of males to females was almost equal: 142 to 128.

Axtell has also described the phenomenon of the "white Indian," the captive who chose or was enticed into staying with his or her captors. Again, there is little evidence of this in northern New England, perhaps because the Abenaki Indians who accounted for many of the raids were less interested in adoption than ransom. Coleman found information on only four "white Indians" from northern New England. Joanna Ordway of Newbury, who was sixteen when taken, remained in Canada and married an Abenaki. Tradition says that Martha Clark of Casco and Samuel Gill of Salisbury also stayed with the tribe which captured them. Sarah Hanson of Cocheco was adopted by Canadian Indians but eventually married a Frenchman. There may have been more, since eighteen per cent of male captives and sixteen per cent of female were simply lost to the record. Among documented cases, however, "Anglo-French" are far more important than "white Indians."

Age was a key factor in determining the outcome of captivity. Although more than fifty percent of all captives of either sex eventually returned to New England, those over twenty were half again as likely to return as those under. This is hardly surprising, since the average length of

captivity was more than three years. For young captives memories of home would be less fully developed and more easily lost. When eleven year old Esther Wheelwright of Wells was brought to Montreal in 1709 after six years among the Abenakis, she had forgotten how to speak English. Even more important than age, however, was gender. Although equal proportions of males and females were eventually ransomed, far more males either escaped or were killed. Females, on the other hand, were twice as likely to stay with their captors. While males resisted; females adapted. To understand how and why they adapted, we must look more closely at their options and opportunities.

Captivity might result in four possible outcomes--death, escape, ransom, or assimilation. The fact that more males than females escaped from their captors is hardly surprising, but it is important to remember that escape was an uncommon feat for either sex. Only eight percent of males as compared with two percent of females managed to get away, and among all the escaped prisoners, male or female, only Hannah Duston and her companions returned with enemy scalps. But if the outcome of Hannah's captivity was unusual, her physical condition at the time of capture was not. Fully one-fifth of adult female captives from northern New England were either pregnant or newly delivered of a child, a fact which gives the "outraged

maternity" theme in the ministerial literature at least some basis in fact.

Hannah Bradley of Haverhill and Tamsen Drew of Oyster River lost infants born in Indian camps, but three Maine women, Anne Batson, Sarah Cole, and Hopewell Hutchins, all in the second trimester of pregnancy when taken, delivered healthy children, baptized soon after birth by solicitous Canadian priests. Five other women, including Hannah Duston, marched northward while still experiencing post partum symptoms. According to Cotton Mather, Catherine Adams of Wells was dragged from her house only eight days after delivery. When told to walk, she was unable to stir, even with the help of a stick, but with prayer a new strength came into her. She trudged twenty miles the first day, was up to her neck in water six times, and at night "fell over head and ears" into a swamp. To the minister, it was miraculous that "She got not the least Cough nor Cold by all this: She is come home alive unto us." [3] Within the larger record of captivity, her health seems less miraculous than commonplace. Whatever their condition, women taken from northern New England survived. Death claimed only three of fifty-two adult captives.

This is in sharp contrast to the record from another part of New England. Nine of twenty-three women taken from Deerfield in western Massachusetts in 1705 died or were

killed. To John Williams, the Deerfield pastor who was himself among the captives, the death of fainting women came to be expected. Williams' own wife, who had lain in a few weeks before, nearly drowned while crossing a stream and was killed by an Indian soon after. Another captive "Who being nigh the time of travail, was wearied with her journey," was slain, as were four others also said to have been "tired." [4] Ministers were not required to explain why God gave one woman the strength to move on and another only the courage to die, but historians cannot so easily assign events to providence. The frequent mention of physical fatigue and physical disability in Williams' account suggests that most Deerfield women were killed because they could not or would not keep up the pace required by the flight into Canada. Perhaps women from the northern frontier with its sawmills and isolated garrison houses may have been more accustomed to wilderness travel than women taken from Deerfield's village center.

In sorting out such differences, however, we must look at the captors as well as the captives. The Abenaki Indians pushed their English captives far beyond their own presumed ability: Hannah Swarton wrote of travelling "over steep and hideous Mountains one while and another while over Swamps and Thickets of Fallen Trees, lying one, two, three foot from the ground, which I have stepped on, from one to

another, nigh a thousand in a day; carrying a great Burden on my Back." [5] But almost as frequently, the narratives testify to Indian assistance in coping with the unaccustomed rigors of life on the trail. Elizabeth Hanson left a particularly detailed account. Her Indian master carried her newborn baby and sometimes even her blanket "tho' he had, as is said, a very heavy Burden of his own." Though Elizabeth climbed mountains so steep that she "was forc'd to creep up on my Hands and Knees," her master helped her. "When we came at very bad Places, he would lend me his Hand, or coming behind, would push me up before him: In all which he shewed some Humanity and Civility more than I could have expected." [6]

"Humanity" certainly had something to do with the treatment the captives received, but there were additional motives. Since prisoners were taken for ransom, for enslavement, or for adoption, their captors had a real stake in their survival. Here the differences between the Deerfield and northern New England captives became most apparent. The Deerfield women were all taken by Mohawk Indians in a single winter attack on their village. The northern New Englanders were taken by Abenaki Indians in much smaller groups in a series of attacks over a period of thirty years. An unusually large group of captives both increased the liability and decreased the value of any one

individual. Even if they might bring a good ransom, pregnant or post parturient women were a high risk group. For a tribe primarily interested in adoption, as these Mohawks seem to have been, they were worth less effort than a sturdy child.[7]

For whatever reason, most wives taken captive from northern New England survived. Returning to towns like Haverhill or Cyster River or York or Berwick, they gave their communities an image of "wilderness courage" more vivid and more immediate than any promoted by the Boston press. Their heroism was less spectacular than that of Hannah Duston, but it was noted and appreciated by their countrymen. Sylvanus Davis wrote a long letter to "be Communicated To the Inhabitants of the Province of Maine" based on intelligence collected by Esther Lee during her short period with the eastern tribes.[8] Grace Hegeman, Tamsen Drew, and Ann Jenkins travelled to Boston in 1695 to testify before the governor and council regarding the activities of an Indian named Bcmbazeen. Hegeman demonstrated a particularly sharp memory for names, numbers, dates, and geographical detail, and after three years among the Canadian Indians she felt free to offer the councilors advice on military strategy as well as specific information. "I apprehend That if the yearly supply from France to St. John's could be intercepted they would be greatly distressed

and forced to draw off," she told them.[9]

In King Philip's War, frontier women had been employed in diplomatic negotiations. After a year among the Abenakis, Elizabeth Hammon wrote and delivered a letter from her captors describing possible terms of settlement with the English. As the wife of a trader she was already adept at communicating with the Indians.[10] Cotton Mather recorded two instances of similar service by women in King William's War. When ten English Captives were redeemed at Sagadahock in 1691, the Indians were "very loth" to part with Mistress Hull "because being able to write well, they made her serve them in the quality of a Secretary." Goody Stockford, an otherwise unidentified captive, was a more direct intermediary between the two sides. She returned to the English as a messenger, then went back to the Indians with a shallop full of "Charity" with which to redeem other prisoners.[11]

It would be interesting to know whether captivity affected the lives of these women after their return. After two or three years in foreign parts did they come back to their struggling villages with new ideas or skills? Did the ability to survive wilderness trials and to adapt to an alien culture change their self-perceptions? Did captivity increase their respect for either enemy or only fan wartime hatred and resentment? We cannot know. Few captives left

written records; almost all returned to the obscurity from whence they were taken.

* * *

If the majority of New England captives returned to their homes, an appreciable minority did not. The behavior of these New Englanders raises the complicated problem of assimilation. Why did some choose to remain among the Indians or with the French? Here again sex and age were important. Recent work combining anthropological and historical insights suggests that "frontiers" should be seen less as geographical than as social spaces, points of contact and interchange between differing cultures.[12] In this sense, New England captives in the wars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries faced two quite different but interrelated frontiers: one involved contact between English colonists and their Indian neighbors, another between these same colonists and their French counterparts to the north.

Indians, like white New Englanders, were capable of killing and torturing their enemies, but they were also capable of totally accepting members of an alien race, of integrating chosen captives into their wigwams, their families, and their tribes. When contrasted with English behavior, such an ability seems all the more remarkable. The most dramatic example of Indian adoption in this period

is Eunice Williams, daughter of the minister of Deerfield. Her Indian name "Gon-songcte" means "they took her and placed her as a member of their tribe." [13] Her story confirms the conclusions of James Axtell regarding the power of Indian adoption. Eunice was seven when taken. Shortly after his arrival in Montreal, her father began working with French priests at the mission of Sault St. Louis in an attempt to redeem her. He was repeatedly told that "the Mohawks would as soon part with their hearts as my child." He finally received permission to meet with her, and in the hour they were together he tried to fortify her against Indian ways. His approach was characteristic. He first checked to see if she could still read, then he reviewed the catechism with her. Although she expressed a desire to return home and promised to follow her father's instructions, he feared that she would not long remember the catechism "having no one to instruct her." William saw his daughter but once more and though he improved the time "to give her the best advice I could," his efforts were of little value. [14]

For a seven-year-old child, advice and half-remembered catechism were no match for the Mohawk curriculum. Eunice assumed Indian dress, ate Indian food, and eventually took an Indian husband. Although French and English officials tried to convince her to leave her new people, she refused.

In 1713, John Schuyler spoke with her for almost two hours, during which time she spoke only two words, "Jaghte oghte," which "amongst the Indians is a plain denyall." [15] In a letter to Samuel Sewall, the Reverend Williams lamented the loss of his daughter and other English children. "I think it would be far easier to gain twice the number of French and Indians to go with us than English," he lamented. [16]

Figures from Deerfield show that many more girls than boys remained among the Indians. Unfortunately there is not enough evidence from northern New England to draw any conclusions about the importance of Indian assimilation. The record for the French, on the other hand, is clear. Statistics confirm the perceptions of the Boston ministry that if New Englanders in captivity were threatened by "savages," they were even more strenuously enticed by "papists." Twenty-nine females and fourteen males from northern New England made new lives for themselves in Canada. That twice as many females as males remained with the enemy can be attributed to three factors: the primacy of marriage, the influence of religion, and the supportive power of female networks.

Marriage was the single most important factor in determining which female captors returned and which stayed in New France. Only one married woman stayed and, as we shall see, her situation was exceptional. The two other

adults who remained in Canada had both been widowed by the war, while all the other expatriot females were single women and girls. In fact, fifty-eight percent of female captives between the ages of twelve and twenty-one found new lives in the land of their enemy. This is of course precisely the age group which in New England would have been putting lamb bones under pillows or counting daisies or otherwise thinking about what the future might bring. If these captives did not prove as resolute as New England ministers might have hoped, it was because they had always known that their future life would depend more than anything else on the choice of a mate. Every girl knew that she would eventually leave her father and mother and perhaps even her community to marry. To leave the country, the language, and the culture of one's childhood was not expected, of course, but in courtship (as in the socialization of children) proximity is more important than any other factor. Maine and New Hampshire were far away and French (and sometimes Indian) suitors insistent. Furthermore, there was no guiding hand of a parent to restrain a youthful infatuation.

In New France, the captives had found a country in which marriage may have been even easier than in New England. The first English captives arrived in Canada after the colonization policies of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's minister of internal affairs, had already proved

successful. Observers in the late 1660's reported a line of settlement along the St. Lawrence; farms were replacing forests, crafts and trades were appearing. It is clear from contemporary documents that industrious settlers of both sexes were welcome in the French settlements, though as in all pioneer societies, women may have been especially welcome.[17] Furthermore, it would have been easier for females to assimilate simply because a wife usually assumes the status of her husband. The wife of an Indian or a Frenchman could become Indian or French by virtue of marriage.

The importance of the marriage choice becomes even more apparent if we look at the three adult captives who remained. Abigail Turbet's story is somewhat obscure, because she died not long after making the decision to stay, so it is difficult to know if she would have returned eventually, yet she probably had little reason to do so. Her husband had died during her captivity and she had no children.[18] There is no question about Abigail Willey's motivation, however. For her, a forced journey to Canada brought freedom from bondage of a different sort. She had no desire to return to her husband, whom she had previously accused in court of insane jealousy and repeated cruelty. He was perhaps just as ready to forget her, for when he went to sea in 1696 he made out a deed of gift which ignored the

existence of a wife in Canada. French and Indians effected a separation which New Hampshire courts had denied. For more than a decade Abigail lived as a single woman in New France, part of the time in the service of Messire Hector de Callieres, Governor of the Island of Montreal. In 1710, now listed as a widow, she married Edouard De Flecheur.[19]

Grizel Otis was also a widow. Her husband had been killed in the attack upon Dover. Within six months in New France, she had married Phillippe Robitaille, a Montreal cooper. But for Grizel, there was an additional factor--religion. Although her husband had been a Quaker, her mother had been Irish and probably Catholic as well. Soon after her arrival, she was baptized by a Canadian priest, as were her three-month-old baby Christine, her two-year-old daughter, and four stepchildren and grandchildren. All of these children and grandchildren grew up in Canada, married there, and with the notable exception of Christine, remained for the rest of their lives.[20] Captivity brought Grizel a new opportunity for marriage, but perhaps even more important, it returned her to the faith of her mother.

The story of Grizel Otis Robitaille also illustrates the significance of the female network of English captives which developed in Montreal. Her presence and her easy assimilation into French faith and society may have been a

bridge for Abigail Willey. Although they had lived in different settlements, they were related by marriage. Abigail's sister was married to Grizel's stepson and had been killed during the attack in which the Otis's were taken.[21] There seems to have been no prior connection with Abigail Turbet, however, yet Grizel apparently sought her out. In 1705, she witnessed Turbet's deathbed abjuration of the protestant faith and her acceptance of Catholicism.[22] For some New England women, Canada offered an opportunity for a new life, but in New France opportunity was often linked to religious institutions fully as zealous as any in New England and to a system of support provided by godly women.

Unlike the protestant communities of New England, New France offered women not one but two life choices. Both are exemplified in the biographies of two Maine girls, Esther and Mary Sayward, great-granddaughters of John Wheelwright, the antinomian minister who came to Maine in 1637 after his sister-in-law Anne Hutchinson fled to Rhode Island. These sisters were to play a quite different part in the story of New England religion. Esther, who was seven when captured, was educated in a school for girls operated by the Sisters of the Congregation de Notre-Dame in Montreal. In 1712, she married Pierre de Lestage, choosing to become a housewife as she would undoubtedly had done in New England. Her sister

Mary, who was eleven when taken to New England, took the second alternative. She too had been taught by the Sisters of the Congregation, so well in fact that she decided to remain among them. In 1699 she took vows and became "Soeur Marie-des-Anges." [23] Five girls from northern New England became nuns. Their choice was simply the most extreme form of a far more common response to French religion.

Women stand side by side with men in the legendary accounts of the founding of Montreal, the one city in North America unequivocally established through religion. [24] As a sister of the Congregation de Notre-Dame, Mary Sayward belonged to one of two important Montreal institutions founded and continued by women. As nuns of L'Hotel Dieu, Mary Silver, Mary Ann Davis, and Ruth Littlefield were associated with the other. Montreal's hospital and its school for girls both antedated significant French settlement. Like the Jesuit missionaries who preceded them and the Ursulines who would eventually establish similar institutions in Quebec, the Hospitaliers and the teaching sisters of Notre-Dame had originally hoped to convert and teach the Indians. By the time the first captives arrived from New England, they had adapted themselves to serving an increasing French population and an occasional Iroquois or Algonkian girl. When war broke out, they were ready to rescue New England women and children from the clutches of

savagery and the arms of false religion.[25]

The religious influence of the New England converts spread outward from Montreal. When a mission and school were established at Sault-au-recollet in 1701, Mary Sayward went there as superior. There she taught Indian girls and young English captives brought from her homeland. She may have been the "papist Englishwoman" who tried to comfort Joseph Bartlett of Newbury when he was brought to the mission in 1708. In 1712, she heard Hannah Hurst, a Deerfield captive, declare her wish to live among the Indians and marry there, and, although there is only circumstantial evidence of this, she may also have met her cousin Esther Wheelwright of Wells, who was taken from the Abenakis in 1709 and who afterward became the most famous of the New England nuns.[26] Esther, who took final vows in 1714, was twice superior of the Ursuline convent of Quebec. Though she eventually re-established contact with her family in Maine, she never renounced her new religion. "God himself assures us," she wrote her mother in 1747, that "he who leaves for his sake, Father, Mother, Brothers and Sisters, shall have an hundred fold in this life, and Life eternal in the next." [27]

Mary Silver of Haverhill was sixteen when she was captured in 1708. Two years later, her mother petitioned the general court, begging help in securing her release.

She was worried about her daughter's soul, as well she might have been, for two months before Mary had been baptized in Montreal with the High and Mighty Seigneur Messire Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, Chevalier of the military order of Saint-Louis, and Governor General of New France standing as godfather. A year later, Vaudreuil wrote Governor Dudley of Massachusetts that Mary was as free as any of the English captives to return but that he wouldn't force someone to go back who wanted to stay. Mary had already entered the order of St. Joseph as a Soeur L'Hotel Dieu. Among her fellow sisters in the order may have been Mary Ann Davis of Haverhill, who had been captured fourteen years before and who eventually took vows. Seven year old Ruth Littlefield of Wells was probably among the children being educated at the nearby convent school. She too would become a Hospitaliere.[28]

Since the New England captives who stayed in Canada included such visible converts as Mary Silver and Esther Wheelwright, it is little wonder that officials at home worried over the threat of French Catholicism. John Williams, the minister of Deerfield, devoted most of his captivity narrative to the spiritual threat of "papacy." In a wartime tract directed to the inhabitants of the frontier, Cotton Mather urged New England captives to fortify themselves through knowledge of the scriptures, strict

observance of the sabbath, and mutual supports through meetings and prayer.[29] A tract printed in Boston was as ineffective as a hastily taught catechism. English girls who arrived in Montreal, Quebec, or the outlying missions, encountered a world which was highly religious, oriented toward conversion, and at the same time almost exclusively feminine.

This world touched adult women as well as their children. Although Elizabeth Hanson, Hannah Swarton, and Margaret Stilson resisted Catholic influence and eventually returned to tell of their triumph, almost a third of adult female captives made at least some capitulation to the French. Only Grizel Otis, Abigail Willey, and Abigail Turbet fully converted, but Anne Batson of Scarborough, Tamsen Drew of Oyster River, Mary Flaisted of York, Sarah Cole of Saco, and Mehitable Goodwin, Elizabeth Tozier, and Martha Grant of Salmon Falls all accepted Catholic baptism though they eventually returned to live in New England. Among adult males, only one--Tamsen Drew's husband Thomas--accepted baptism. There is no indication of coercion here. Though the priests might take an infant from its mother's arms to sprinkle it against the fires of hell, they did not forcibly baptize adults. The "susceptibility" of these women to Catholicism is best explained in social terms. In New France, the religious institutions which were

most intimately involved with captives were dominated by women.

The most frequent name on baptismal records of New England captives of all ages, both those who returned and those who stayed, is that of M. Henri-Etoine de Meriel, who was not only priest of the parish of Notre-Dame but also chaplain of the Hotel-Dieu and confessor of the pupils and sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame.[30] Though Father Meriel was himself interested in the captives, the fact that twice as many females as males succumbed to French influence points beyond the zealous father to the sisters who nursed and taught them after their purchase from the Indians. Nearly all of the girls who married and stayed in New France were first nurtured by nuns and baptized under their care. Local tradition says that after a year with the sisters, eight-year-old Sarah Gerrish of Dover went home in tears, hiding a little crucifix under her arm pit.[31] The ministry to the captives became even more effective with the addition of the English sisters, including Mary Silver, who eventually succeeded Father Meriel as catechist. The network of female captives in New France--from Grizel Otis Robitaille who established her family in Montreal in 1689 to the last of the captives in the wars of the eighteenth century--deserves further study, but its existence seems certain.[32]

By putting one foot in front of the other, New England women and their daughters survived the trek to Canada. Once there, they responded in different ways. Some interpreted their captivity, much as the ministers did, as a spiritual quest for courage and faith. Others accepted it as both an opportunity and a trial. Little girls responded to the nurture they were given, sometimes embracing a faith foreign to New England. Older girls, especially those in their teens or early twenties, frequently chose to marry rather than to wait months and years for ransom. Most married women kept their eyes on home and eventually returned, though not without accepting French friendship and eventually French religion. If female New Englanders resisted captivity less strenuously than males, their adaptation was never merely passive. They proved themselves "moveables," like the pots, pans, and cows which formed the chief female inheritance in either country.

* * *

One of the most visible--and moveable--of New England captives was Christine Otis of Dover, New Hampshire. The details of her life portray the often dramatic contrast between literary heroism and life. Christine was taken to Canada as an infant with her mother Grizel Otis Robitaille. She grew up in New France, was educated by the Sisters of the Congregation, and in 1707 at the age of eighteen married

Louis Le Beau. In 1713 he died leaving her with two daughters. A year later, she married Captain Thomas Baker, a Deerfield captive who had escaped in 1705 and who now returned to Montreal as an interpreter with a party of English negotiators. Where Christine met Baker, whether she consciously chose to abandon Canada in her decision to marry him, or how this choice affected her relationship with her mother remain obscure. She followed her new husband back to Massachusetts, though French officials denied her permission to take her children by Le Beau. Though a widow she was only twenty-one at the time; love and a yearning for adventure may have been more powerful motives than her ties to her mother or children. But the old home was not easily forgotten. In 1722, with support from the Massachusetts government, she returned to Montreal to assist in retrieving some English captives. Again she petitioned unsuccessfully for custody of her daughters, returning home without them.[33]

In 1729 she received an earnest letter from her mother's confessor, Francois Seguenot. "Consider within yourself, my dear Christina, poor stray sheep," he wrote, urging her to return like the prodigal son to the faith and family she had left behind. Christine's own response to this letter is unknown, but her husband was concerned enough about it to give it "to a Gentleman well vers'd in that

Language to transcribe, in order to employ some person to answer it." Both the translated letter and the answer appeared that year as A Letter from a Romish Priest in Canada. A personal appeal which had perhaps originated with Christine's mother thus became a ministerial polemic, as the anonymous protestant tangled with the Jesuit point by point in a debate over scriptural interpretation and ecclesiastical history. Christine's own soul was obviously of less interest to either side than the argument it made possible.

In a telling passage, the protestant apologized for the level of the discourse. "I perceived Madam," he wrote, "that I am quoting Authors that are unknown to you; but you may lay the blame of it upon Mr. Suguenot, who amuses you with Stories, into the truth of which you can never examine." The condescension of Seguenot was almost as pronounced. He urged Christine to read his letter again and again, since her eternal happiness or misery was at stake, but he also asked her to show it to her ministers and requested that they reply to him in Latin or Greek if they did not know French! [34] The two clergymen were conducting a professional argument using a specialized vocabulary reserved for insiders. Fine distinctions between "the Spouse of Christ" and the "invisible Church" or between "priestly sacrifice" and "the Lord's supper" probably meant

little to Christine Otis Le Beau Baker, who had experienced the conflict between English protestantism and French catholicism on a far more personal level.

When Thomas Baker died in 1735, Christine decided to begin life again for a third time. Having lived the first twenty years of her life in Canada and the second twenty in Massachusetts, she took the proceeds of a land grant from the General Court and set herself up for the next forty as a tavern keeper in Dover, New Hampshire, the town where her story began. Uprooted by war and transplanted by marriage, she returned to the home of her birth where she died in 1773, a curious but suggestive relic of the age of female heroism in New England.

1. In 1897, Alice Baker privately published a collection of romantic sketches, "True Stories of New England Captives Carried to Canada During the Old French and Indian Wars." Her work was completed after her death by her assistant Emma Coleman. New England Captives Carried to Canada (Portland, Maine: 1925) is organized by town, and includes lists of all captives thought to have been taken from each locality with biographical material collected on each. Coleman wrote introductory chapters on the wars, the French missions, and the Indians, but really attempted little systematic interpretation. Her book is a rich but erratic compendium of primary source material, most of which is documented. All statistics in this chapter are compiled from information given on individual captives in Volume I, chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and volume II, 15, 16, and 17. I have excluded a few names which Coleman mentioned but did not document.
2. James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," WMQ, Third Series, XXXII, (January 1975), pp. 58-59.
3. Cotton Mather, Good Fetch'd Out of Evil (Boston, 1706).
4. John Williams, The Redeemed Captive, ed. Edward W. Clark, (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), p. 48-59, 51, 52.
5. "A Narrative of Hannah Swarton, Containing Wonderful Passages, relating to her Captivity, and her Deliverance," in Cotton Mather, Humiliations follow'd with Deliverances, (Boston, 1697), p. 59.
6. [Elizabeth Hanson], God's Mercy Surmounting Man's Cruelty, (Philadelphia, 1728), p. 9.
7. Coleman, II, 40-41, and individual biographies of captives.
8. Collections Maine Historical Society, IX, 60.

9. "Statements of Grace Higman and Others in Relation to Being Taken Captive by the Indians," NEHGR, XVIII (1864), pp. 161-163.
10. Coleman, I, 69-70.
11. Cotton Mather, Decennium Luctuosum (Boston, 1699), pp. 227, 220.
12. James Axtell, "The Ethnohistory of Early America," WMQ, Third Series, XXXV (January 1978), pp. 110 ff.
13. Coleman, II, 58.
14. Williams, Redeemed Captive, p. 65-66.
15. Coleman, II, 57.
16. quoted in Coleman, II, 58.
17. W.J. Eccles, The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 71 and chapter four, *passim*.
18. Coleman, II, 8-9; NLD, 131, 699.
19. Coleman, I, 255-259; Col. NHHS, VIII, 147; New Hampshire Court Papers, MS, New Hampshire State Archives, VII, 225, 227.
20. Coleman, I, 75, 123-6, 143, 147, 149, 150-1, 162-3, 321; II, 9, 21, 412; NLD, 520-521, 721.
21. NLD, 558, 754, 520-521.
22. Coleman, II, 8-9.

23. Coleman, I, 239-240, NLD, 367, 588, 744.
24. Eccles, Canadian Frontier, p. 40.
25. James Douglas, New England and New France, (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913) pp. 360-366.
26. Coleman, I, 359; II, 96.
27. Coleman, I, 429.
28. Coleman, I, 357; I, 268-271, 398, 407, 409.
29. C. Mather, Good Fetch'd, p. 21.
30. Coleman, I, 40, 358.
31. Coleman, I, p. 144-146.
32. To fully develop this topic would require a more detailed picture of the operation of both the school and the hospital than are available in Coleman's sketches, but the interlocking of names is clear even from the information she includes on godmothers and godfathers of baptized captives. Grizel Otis Robitaille is highly visible throughout.
33. Coleman, I, pp. 146-154.
34. Francois Seguenot, A Letter from a French Priest, (Boston, 1729), pp. 5, 20, 11, and preface.

XI:1 - New England Captives

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Escaped</u>	<u>Ransomed</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Stayed</u>	<u>Unknown</u>
All Females	128	2%	50%	3%	27%	16%
Over 21	52	6%	63%	6%	4%	21%
12-21	19	0%	36%	0%	58%	5%
under 12	38	0%	40%	2%	42%	15%
Age not known	19	0%	52%	0%	31%	15%
All Males	142	8%	50%	10%	13%	18%
Over 21	60	10%	61%	11%	3%	13%
12-21	21	19%	42%	14%	23%	0%
under 12	41	2%	46%	10%	17%	24%
Age not known	20	0%	35%	5%	20%	40%

Source: Emma Coleman, New England Captives Carried to Canada, (Portland, Maine: 1925), individual biographies in volume I, chapters 6-10, 12-14; volume II, Chapters 15-17.

Chapter Twelve

Daughters of Zion

When Christine Otis Baker returned to the Piscataqua in 1735 and joined the congregational church at Dover, she entered a world strikingly more "religicus" in the formal sense than the one she had left behind as an infant captive. In 1689, there had been five congregational churches in Maine and New Hampshire; in 1735 in the very same area there were twenty-one.[1] In neighborhoods where there had once been only preaching (and that sporadically), there were now fully organized congregations with Deacons and sacraments. It was ironic that Christine, whose father had once been fined for Quaker sympathies, should return from French Catholicism to the respectability of the congregational faith, for Quakers were now tolerated in Dover as elsewhere in northern New England.[2] Religious expansion embraced at least limited diversity, though the congregational churches were in the great majority. Scotch-Irish Presbyterians had established churches in Chester and in Londonderry, and by 1736 there would be an Anglican church in Portsmouth.[3] The ordinances had at last been extended to the valley of Achor.

More important to the long-range history of New England women than the fighting viragces who resisted the enemy or the stalwart captives who surmounted the wilderness were the

ordinary and invisible women who filled the churches in the first decades of the eighteenth century. The position of women in most churches was contradictory. Although most of Christianity accepted the spiritual equality of women, only the Society of Friends extended spiritual equality to the social realm. Had Christine Eaker chosen to join the Quaker congregation in Dover, she would have participated in a "Women's Meeting" which had its own leadership, its own area of jurisdiction, and its own voice in the government of monthly and quarterly meetings.[4] Having chosen equality, however, she would also have chosen a way of life at the periphery of New England society. Religion in northern New England was dominated by the congregational way.

Although the descendants of the Puritans elevated the authority of the congregation in their rejection of bishops and presbyteries and though most congregations were predominantly female, women were denied full participation in the establishment or the governance of religion. At Hampton Falls in 1712, for example, seventy percent of the original communicants were female, yet only men signed the church covenant. Women simply assented.[5] As members of churches ostensibly organized by the laity, women achieved an equivocal status; they could acquiesce but not lead. At the same time, they were assured full spiritual equality and were often praised for exemplary piety, sometimes, as in

Cotton Mather's sermons, being characterized as "defenders" of Zion.

Despite inequities, church membership was one of the few public distinctions unequivocally available to women. Men could be fenceviewers, deacons, constables, captians, hog reeves, selectmen, clerks, magistrates, tithingmen, or sealers of leather. Women could be members of a gathered church. In a society in which church membership had to be sought, that was no small distinction. Furthermore, church membership was not contingent upon any other social role. A woman could be admitted to the Table of the Lord regardless of the status, economic position, or religious proclivities of her husband. As his deputy, she could reckon with a neighbor. With or without his blessing she could settle accounts with God. Females not only achieved church membership more frequently than males, but they did so at a younger age. In two Andover churches in the decades before 1730, women on the average became church members a full ten years before men of comparable age, suggesting that godly wives may indeed have led their husbands to Christ as so many ministers hoped.[6] With or without their spouses, women in New England accepted Christ. In the church at Berwick, only thirty-nine of 155 women admitted between 1708 and 1752 were joined by their husbands.[7]

Just as church membership gave women independent status, religious teaching often ratified traditional female values, supporting old wives in their guardianship of sexual mores, elevating charity over commerce and neighborliness over trade, but above all transforming weakness into gentleness, obscurity into humility, changing worldly handicaps into spiritual strengths. Women may not have interpreted religion in exactly the same way as ministers, but they cared about the churches. To understand the importance of religion in northern New England, we must consider first the social and then the personal roles fulfilled by religious women in the years between 1650 and 1750.

* * *

Churches were tax-supported public institutions. As a consequence, controversies over the settlement and maintenance of ministers, the placement of meeting houses, or the subdivision of congregations often had economic and political ramifications. Most historians have read these events as exclusively public issues, understandably--but mistakenly--ignoring the roles of women. By piecing together scattered evidence from a number of communities, we can discern three significant roles for women in these community battles. Relying upon private power within their own families, women promoted the establishment of religion

in outlying areas of older towns; using their influence within the village network as well as with their husbands, women served as guardians of ministerial reputation; and finally, drawing upon the authority of their own powerlessness, certain women became vessels of the supernatural.

Men signed the petitions, wrote the appeals, and cast the votes, but women frequently supplied the energy which established new congregations and parishes in the outlying areas of older towns. The same pattern was repeated over and over again in New England. One segment of a township, pleading distance and inconvenience, asked to be separated from the original. The old, jealous of its power of taxation, refused. The controversies which resulted fill the pages of seventeenth and eighteenth-century records and figure prominently in community studies by twentieth-century historians. Yet without recognizing the quite different practical problems of men and women, it is impossible to fully understand the motivations of the "outlivers." Why, for example, should aspiring freeholders in remote sections of town want to increase their own tax burden? As Richard Bushman has observed, they sometimes "wanted to support a church even before they were financially capable of doing so."^[8] They may have been seeking ratification of their own separateness, but they may also have been responding to very

real pressures at home. The petitions themselves suggest this. Whether written in seventeenth-century Massachusetts or eighteenth-century New Hampshire, the same argument appears again and again. Aged or feeble persons and especially mothers with young children could not walk three or four miles to meeting every Sunday, especially in winter.

Ann Jenkins and Tamsen Drew had treked six hundred miles into Canada, but their husbands still signed the petition from Durham Point in 1718 pleading the inconvenience of coming two miles to meeting.[9] For women, the problem was not inability to walk, to manipulate a canoe, or to ride a horse. Most women were held at home by breastfeeding, by the care of infants and young children, and by concern over the reliability of servants. The same problems existed in Scotch-Irish settlements in New Hampshire in the 1700's as in Puritan settlements in Connecticut in the 1600's. They were in the nature of female life. In old age, Catherine Smith recalled her first years in the new settlement of Bedford in the 1740's. "We could seldom hear a single sermon without going to Londonderry. But we did na' always stay at home. Annie Orr, and I, carried my Robert in our arms when he was ten months old, travelling on foot, to Mr. McGregor's meeting; Ben [her husband] went with us, but he did us little good, for he was not worth a fig to carry a bairn." [10]

Other fathers may have been more willing to carry their children, but they did not have to care for them during the meeting or feed them between sermons. Entreating her uncle, John Winthrop, Jr., to support the establishment of a church at Mistick, Connecticut, Hannah Gallop wrote of the problems facing mothers who came long distances to meeting and then stayed in the town all day "without any substance" so that those "that have young children suckling, many times are brought exceedingly faint, & much weakened, & divers are not able to goe all winter." [11]

When the inhabitants of Chebacco petitioned the town of Ipswich in 1677 for liberty to call a minister, they complained of the three to five mile journey to the meeting house. In winter the days were short and the way hazardous and long. "Though some of us, with some difficulty, do sometimes assemble with your selves yet the greatest part are constrained to tarry at home." Children could not attend meeting, and if left at home without supervision or with unreliable servants, they were likely to "prophane that holy day." The town predictably insisted that these outlanders were not "able to bear the weight of their own undertakings." The taxes simply would not stretch to accommodate another minister. In Ipswich the position of the outlying inhabitants was especially sensitive because the town had been conceived as a nucleated village with farmers

living in the center and travelling to the periphery to cultivate their crops. The town implied that the residents of Chebacco had brought their problem upon themselves. They might consider "that what burthen lyes upon them the first day of the week the same or greater lyes upon their friends in the towne the other six." [12] But of course, it was not the men of Chebaccc who had been inconvenienced. It was their wives and children. The price they were paying for the comfort of living on their own farms was intense pressure from their women for the right to go to church on Sunday.

That the pressure was indeed coming from the female side of the church is apparent in the next episode in the chronicle of Chebacco. While the men fought it out in town meeting and court, the women privately schemed--and then acted on their own! As the parish clerk so quietly put it in a church history written sometime afterward:

while we were in this great conflict that all things seemed to act against us some women without the knowledge of their husbands and with the advice of some few men went to other towns and got help and raised the house that we intended for a meeting house if we could get liberty. [13]

The wives of William Goodhue, Thomas Varney, and Abraham Martin ended up in county court where they were fined for contempt of authority. [14] Their behavior is a classic example of the kind of demonstrative disobedience which we described in chapter ten, but it is also evidence of the

concern of at least some New England women for the establishment of their church. Their impetuosity was expensive but effective. Within a few months, Chebacco got permission to call a minister. When the church was gathered it had a building to meet in.

The behavior of the wives of Chebacco is more visible than most female activity in northern New England, but their objective was probably characteristic. Women had a vested interest in the establishment of churches. The relationship between women and the ministry was not always a comfortable one, however. In illness and death or in cases of marital disruption or sexual misbehavior, the authority of the clergy might encounter the equally powerful influence of the old wives of the community. When the interests and perceptions of the two were in harmony, the combination was powerful, but when they were at odds, a clash was possible. The most obvious conflict involved folk magic. Ministers were outraged when they found parishioners draping their doorways with bay leaves or baking witch cakes at the suggestion of a neighbor, but the most serious opposition did not come from cunning women, whose activities were easily dismissed as "superstitious," but from matrons who shared the minister's basic values.[15] In these cases, circumspect church members measured ministerial behavior against ministerial profession and sometimes dropped a

telling remark or two into the pot of village gossip. Simmering there it might boil over in public conflict months or even years later. Women could not control salaries, but they could control reputation, and of course they could use the same weapons in attacking ministers as they used in promoting churches--their influence with their husbands.

Conflict between ministers and influential matrons is at least one ingredient in prolonged and acrimonious church controversies in Rowley in the 1670's, in Salem Village in the 1680's, and in Durham in the 1720's. In October of 1672, Jeremiah Shepard was invited to preach at Rowley for a year. The town already had one minister, Samuel Phillips, who continued as teacher after the death of the old pastor, Ezekiel Rogers. Shepard, though younger than Phillips, was a candidate for Rogers' position. Obviously there was the potential for jealousy, but Phillips apparently supported his young colleague during the first year. After sixteen months, though there was some dissension, his invitation was renewed, but by spring when Shepard asked for membership in the church as a prelude to a coming bid for ordination, a vigorous controversy emerged. The church rejected him, not being "satisfied as to his piety, nor spirit." [16]

What had the young minister done to offend the sober Christians of Rowley? The evidence is scanty but intriguing. At the end of a tumultuous meeting in which the

church voted to cut Shepard off even before his time was up, Samuel Phillips wrote that Shepard had a "loose tongue," that the church did not like the company he kept, and that they suspected he neglected his studies and his family.

Then he added:

In the time of my wife's long and dangerous sickness he came below to look upon her and there took offense that she did not show him respect though my wife affirms that she bowed her head as well as she could being then entering into her ague fit, but he never would come to see her though I wished him to do it.[17]

The coughing spell in Mistress Phillips' parlor was probably the culminating event in a long and perhaps unconscious struggle. Shepard was a young man; Mistress Phillips was an old wife and experienced Christian, yet because he was a minister and potentially at least her husband's superior in the church at Rowley, she could not relate to him in the maternal way which might have been natural. Though outspoken and apparently self-confident, Shepard must have been sensitive to his own uncertain status in Rowley. He was a newcomer, a nonchurch member, and a probationary pastor. He also lived for a time in the Phillips' home, undoubtedly under the close scrutiny not only of the teacher but his wife. If her respect for him was equivocal, his hunger for authority was transparent.

Mistress Phillips was not the only woman to tangle with the self-conscious and perhaps abrasive young minister. When one of the deacons informed him of the church's decision, Shepard immediately blamed "Goody Elithorp," whose comments (to Phillips?) had apparently helped to fuel the opposition. The woman hated him so much, he said, that "if she had an opportunity he doubted not but she would cut his throat, yea, so far as a man can know a woman's heart by her words she would actually do it." [18] Shepard's dismay at the inscrutable territory of a "woman's heart" suggests one source of his difficulty. He simply did not know how to deal with an important part of his constituency.

Contempt for--or perhaps more accurately fear of--female power is a crucial element not only in Shepard's story but also in those of George Burroughs and Hugh Adams who were noticeably concerned with maintaining their authority over women. George Burroughs, like Jeremiah Shepard, encountered trouble as a new minister in a rural community. He arrived in Salem Village in 1681 and abruptly left in 1683 after his salary had been withheld. For a time he and his wife lived with Captain John Putnam who later had him arrested for debt as he stood in the meeting house pleading for his back salary. Beyond that, little is known of his brief tenure except that his wife died during his stay in Salem. Nine years later he was brought back from

Maine and tried as a wizard.[19]

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum have been unable to fit Burroughs' story into the larger Porter-Putnam controversy which they believe dominated Salem Village politics in the years before the witchcraft outbreak of 1692.[20] This may be because personality rather than politics was the cause of the minister's troubles. During his witchcraft trial, John and Rebecca Putnam told a story in public which had probably been told often in private in Salem Village, perhaps in the hearing of the afflicted girls whose supposed demonic possession brought Burroughs and the other accused witches to trial. (We will return to the religious role of those girls, but for the moment our concern is with Burroughs.) According to the Putnams, during the time that Burroughs lived in their house he had a serious argument with his wife, so serious that he asked them to come into the room and hear it out.

the contrivency that was betwixt them was that the
afor s'd Burros did requier his wife to give him a
written covenant under her hand and Seall that shee
would never reveall his secrets

Burroughs perhaps hoped that the older couple would support him. After all, he was their minister. But according to their testimony, they had simply replied that a man and wife "had once made a covenant before god and men which covenant we did conseive did bind each other to keep their lawful secrets." All the time that Burroughs was at their house,

they added, "he was a very sharp man to his wife, notwithstanding to our observations shee was a very good and dutifull wife to him." [21]

By some mysterious process, the two main details in this story--the signing of a covenant and the man's anger with his wife--emerged in the spectral evidence which convicted Burroughs. To the afflicted girls, he was not only a witch but the ringleader of witches, the man who forced women to sign the Devil's black book. Furthermore, his two dead wives had appeared in their winding sheets and testified that their husband had killed them. Reports from neighbors reinforced evidence from the invisible world. It did not help Burroughs' case when two matrons from his new congregation in Maine appeared in Salem to tell of his unkindness to his second wife, describing her appeals to neighbors for help and his almost paranoic anxieties about her conversations with other women. [22] Burroughs' secrets were known in the community of women, both in Salem Village and in Maine. When public officials listened to those secrets, the result was devastating.

Hugh Adams was explicit about the source of his trouble--Elizabeth Davis. Unlike the women of Rowley or of Salem, the women of Durham were not accustomed to ministerial government. Elizabeth Davis' first contact with the church at Durham after its establishment in 1718 was to

ask for baptis~~m~~ for herself and two sons. Like many other adults in this community, she was not yet formally a Christian. Her husband, Lieutenant Colonel James Davis, town moderator, assemblyman, and justice of the court of common pleas, remained outside the fold.[23] Elizabeth's squabble with Adams did not emerge into the public record until 1723 when suddenly she found herself quite capable of traveling the four miles to Dover where she and her husband both applied for admission to the old parent church which both of them had ignored for most of their lives. Adams was furious. He did not mind losing Mistress Davis as a communicant, but he did not want the embarrassment of her acceptance by a neighboring congregation.

He quickly dispatched an "ecclesiastical document" to the "Reverend Honorable and beloved" Mr. Cushing at Dover, detailing the scandalous behavior of Davis and his wife. The Colonel had taken a false oath, Adams said; he had been instrumental in withholding the minister's salary, had coveted the parsonage land for his son, and had used his position as judge "against his own legal minister for so innocently playing at nine pins at a house no ways license for a Tavern." But his real crime was in hearkening to his wife more than to the Lord of Heaven (or his pastor!). Mistress Davis was the real villain. She had publicly railed against Adams by saying that he had spread a lie

about Sobriety Thomas, had resisted his efforts to call her son to account for his involvement with said Sobriety, had mocked Christ's ordinances by saying that a disciplinary meeting was "going to be another cabal," but especially had been "a busy body at every one of her husbands Courts to be his adviser or intermedler in his passing Judgement in any case." [24] An imperious minister had met an imperious matron! She openly defied him and she used her influence with her husband to harrass him. On November 23, 1723, Elizabeth and James Davis were admitted to the Dover Church where they remained until continuing conflict in Durham finally resulted in Adams' expulsion from the pulpit in 1739. Not surprisingly, Colonel Davis was prominently involved in the settlement of the new minister, Nicholas Gilman.

The ministers in these three stories, though different in other ways, shared two common traits--an acute sensitivity to patriarchal authority and a failure to measure up in some way to the standards they professed. Shepard neglected his studies; Furroughs was unkind to his wife; Adams played at nine pins in a tavern, but their real flaw was more damning--they mistrusted a "woman's heart." This is not to say that every case of ministerial disruption in early New England was caused by gender conflict. It is simply to assert that personal as well as

economic and social conflicts shaped religious establishment, that the ability to win the confidence of the female members of a congregation was one ingredient in ministerial stability, and that women without formal power might still wield influence.

The third way in which women influenced religion in northern New England was through ecstatic or hysteric utterance as intermediaries between the visible and invisible worlds. Because women were perceived as weaker than men both in intellect and in will, they might become instruments of the supernatural. Two of the most dramatic examples of this occurred at Salem Village in 1692 and at Oyster River in 1742, in the very churches which had earlier ousted George Burroughs and Hugh Adams. Our objective is not to explain the psychological mechanism which first propelled women and girls into public view, the social and theological setting which permitted them to stay there, nor the communal anxieties and hopes which validated their messages, but to delineate a religious role available to women. Its significance emerges in events described by two ministers, Deodat Lawson and Nicholas Gilman.

When Lawson, a former preacher at Salem Village, heard of the apparent outbreak of demons there, he hastened to investigate. Arriving on Saturday, 19 March 1692, he observed two of the afflicted girls at the local inn and at

the home of the Reverend Mr. Parris, in whose family the first possessions had occurred. The next day, having accepted an invitation to preach in the meeting house, he encountered even more remarkable evidence of the power of Satan. Seven of the afflicted were there--Mrs. Pope, a respectable matron of the town; Goody Bibber, a desperately poor and frequently contentious pariah; four maid servants, Abigail Williams, Mary Walcott, Mercy Lewis, and Elizabeth Hubbard; and one child, Ann Putnam--a surprisingly accurate cross-section of the female community of the village. These women and girls were to act in quite unexpected ways. As Lawson opened the morning worship, the entire group fell into fits, causing him to interrupt his prayer. After the psalm was sung, Abigail Williams, one of the maidservants, looked straight at the minister and said, "Now stand up, and Name your Text." When he had read it, she sniffed, "it is a long Text." The sermon had hardly begun when the formerly circumspect Mrs. Pope spoke out, "Now there is enough of that," whereupon Abigail informed the congregation that a certain suspected witch in the room was "suckling her Yellow bird betwixt her fingers." The child, Anne Putnam, would also have testified out loud if the women around her had not prevented it. Little Anne was certain she had seen another yellow bird sitting on the minister's hat as it hung on a peg by the pulpit.[25] Because their affliction placed

them outside society, the possessed could command their minister, speak in the church, and comment on the sermon as no child, servant, or female adult could have done. Like the disorderly women of Marblehead, they were able to do things that rational persons and especially responsible male officials could not.

In another setting, similar behavior was interpreted in an essentially positive rather than negative way. In Durham in 1742, children, maidservants, and several young men as well, saw visions and fell into trances. Nicholas Gilman, the new pastor in that village, saw this as evidence of God's converting power. In the afternoon service on March 3, 1742, after a visiting minister had preached, "Mary Reed declared in Publick the close of Her last Vision," after which Gilman "added a word of Exhortation to the People." There was no disruption here, because the minister accepted the role of the young woman as seer. When Stephen Busse saw a white Dove come down into the meeting house on another occasion, Gilman interpreted it as a sign of God's blessing.[26] There would be no suckling of yellow birds in his congregation.

A comparison of the role of seer in the witchcraft accusations and in the Great Awakening might yield important insights into changes in female roles in northern New England.[27] But one obvious difference is worth noting

here. In Salem Village, visionary girls began by attacking older women. Although men, and even some very prominent men, were eventually included among the accused, in its initial stages it seems to have been an intragender conflict. Young women in tune with the supernatural accused old women in tune with the supernatural. The Great Awakening, in contrast, tended to break down both gender and social barriers in a common quest for a witness of the divine. Nicholas Gilman is a striking example of this. Hungering for evidence of the workings of the Holy Spirit, he fine-tuned his spirit to the responses of his listeners, leaning on them as fervently as seeking Christians leaned upon their pastors. This reversal of roles is most apparent in Gilman's relationship with Mary Reed, an obscure young woman whose very existence in Durham would be unknown except for her amazing influence upon her minister.

On March 26, she came to Gilman's house in the evening and told him "She had been exceeding full of Joy all day that it Seemd to her she was nct here, and it had run in her Mind all day - this Night shall thy Soul be required." She instructed Gilman to send for her clothes and dispose of them to the poorest perscns in town, then she went to bed, and after "many deep Sighs as tho' Her soul was departing" fell into an "almost breathless sleep." Gilman was obviously anxious about Mary's presence in his house, since

his wife was then away in Exeter. When she waked, he went to her,

and perceiving she could speak thought what to ask her, and knowing how My Character and Conduct at the present day would be represented abroad - I asked her - whether I ought to mind what men said of Me? She answered - No, No, Mind what the Spirit of Christ Says - Take Him for your Guide, and his Word for your Rule. He has a Great Work for you to do, but don't be afraid He will carry you through it.

Mary Reed stayed at the Gilman home from Saturday evening until Tuesday morning, sleeping, instructing her minister, praying, and "Singing praises to God in Extempore Verse." On Monday night she awoke as if from a long sleep. On Tuesday morning, before Gilman was out of his chamber, she had left the house. When she returned she "inclined not at present to declare what she saw." [28] Gilman neither counseled nor tried to "cure" Mary Reed. He marvelled at her receptivity to the spirit, and when she spoke he listened. All boundaries--of sex, of wealth, or of education--dissolved in a common rapture.

Not everyone in Durham was ready to accept such behavior, however. A month later Sarah Johnson came to Gilman, offering a text which she had received in a vision, and apparently stayed the night, but because of "a great and very unreasonable disturbance made in the Town," she went to the home of Stephen Busse. Gilman experienced intense religious questing in the months before his ordination and

at the time of the awakening in Durham was suffering personal stress and perhaps some estrangement from his wife as well, who was in the last stages of her sixth pregnancy and apparently having great difficulty in making the transition from her home in Exeter to Durham-[29] The particular circumstances in this case were perhaps unique, though the role enacted by Mary Reed was not. As a weak though receptive vessel, she linked the visible and invisible worlds.

* * *

Women helped to shape religion in northern New England, but it is important to recognize that their effectiveness was dependent upon the approval of the men who voted the taxes, called the ministers, and interpreted the visions. The more successful and dramatic witnesses of female power were also the most short-lived. The women of Chebacco meekly recanted their disobedience. Elizabeth Davis left the Durham church long before the minister she attacked. The visionary young women of Salem and Durham faded into obscurity, while the ministers who supported them soon lost favor with their congregations. The most important story of religion is not to be found on the institutional but on the personal level and especially on the level of belief. For a woman like Christine Otis Eaker, affiliation with a church may have had little theological significance. Her move from

Catholicism to Protestantism was accomplished socially, through marriage; whether it ever became more is difficult to tell. But for other women religion provided a way of ordering the most basic experiences of human life. To approach this inner dimension of religion, we must turn once again to the wartime literature of northern New England, to the crisis of captivity, and to the discovery of heroism which it made possible. Rare self-portraits of two women, Mary Rowlandson and Elizabeth Hanson, show strikingly different responses to pain and death, suffering and sorrow, anger and fear, but especially to the experience of subjection. For these women, Indian captivity heightened trials which all women shared. Their narratives make accessible patterns of female response which might not have been visible otherwise, and they help us to relate the development of religion to the problem of assertiveness raised in the myth of Jael.

One narrative was published in 1680, the other half a century later in 1729. One woman was a Puritan, the other a Quaker. One woman spent her captivity among a community of local Indians who had long associated with the English. The other was seized by a small band of Canadian Indians who eventually sold her to the French. One woman wrote her own story, the other simply told it to a visiting preacher, who took it down, as he said, "from her own

Mouth." Obviously, differences in belief and in circumstances determined contrasts between the stories. But for the moment, let us ignore the particular historical settings of these two stories and consider them as different human responses to a similar situation. Both women were deeply religious Christian protestants. Both were captured in frightening attacks which resulted in the death of loved ones. Both carried children with them into the wilderness. Both attributed their deliverance to the mercy of God and published their stories in order to promote piety and to return thanks to Him. By examining the survival strategies which the two women used, but especially by looking at their perceptions of their captors and of themselves, we can more fully grasp the interior religious experience available to colonial women.

The primary social category in Mary Rowlandson's tale is race, in Elizabeth Hansen's gender. For Mary Rowlandson the principal determinant of worth was religious status, for Elizabeth Hansen religious temperament. In practical terms, Mary Rowlandson survived because she knew how to use English huswifery in the service of her captors, Elizabeth Hansen because she was able to form a bond with Indian women who taught her what she needed to know. In religious terms, Mary Rowlandson was saved because God chose her, though she was utterly helpless and worthless outside His sustaining

care. Elizabeth Hansen was saved because patience, long-suffering, and kindness were more powerful than cruelty. To understand the full significance of their contrasting personalities, we must look at each story in some detail.

Mary Rowlandson's narrative is a powerful and deeply moving piece of writing as long as the reader can suspend twentieth-century judgment and enter a world in which Indians were by definition "atheistical, proud, wild, cruel, barbarous, brutish.. diabolically creatures.. the worst of the heathen." [30] Like much heroic literature in the western world, it sketches a cosmic battle between foul heathens and fair Christians. Within the limitations of such a setting, Mary Rowlandson emerges as a courageous and ruddy heroine, resourceful, fiesty, more housewife than Saint, a minister's wife who gave up her pipe-smoking in captivity but not her vivid speech. The scriptures which pepper her narrative come from the rather grimy hand of a striving Christian rather than from the polished pen of a preacher. Her writing has a concreteness and a visual immediacy that have not faded after 300 years.

Even in captivity, Mary Rowlandson proved herself an industrious housewife. She suffered the loss of her home and the death of her wounded child, yet she clung to her knitting needles, kept a sure sense of time, and returned to

Boston knowing exactly what she had eaten, where she had gotten it, and in whose pot she had cooked it. Her chief work among the Indians was knitting and sewing. Although she served as a slave in Quinnaon's family, she was resourceful in trading her services with other Indians for extra food, exchanging stockings for a quart of peas or a shirt for a bit of bear meat. Into her pocket went everything she begged or bartered--meal, meat, a parched-wheat pancake fried in bear's grease, and even a piece of stale cake handed to her by another Lancaster housewife as they were separated. The cake was perhaps a symbolic tie to the orderly world she had left behind, "there it lay, till it was so mouldy (for want of good baking) that one could not tell what it was made of; it fell all to crumbs, and grew so dry and hard, that it was like little flints; and this refreshed me many times, when I was ready to faint." [31] Characteristically, Mary could not resist commenting upon the quality of the baking even in describing the depths of her hunger.

She was prepared to survive captivity not only by her housewifely skills but also by her understanding of the nature of servility. Even though she hated and feared her captors, she knew how to please them. Growing up in an hierarchal society, she had learned what it meant to be an inferior. Among her many losses was a role shift from

mistress to maid, a reversal of what she had experienced in the process of maturing and marrying. Metacom understood this humiliation; just before her redemption, he told her kindly that she would soon be mistress again.[32]

Significantly, Mary's portrait of Metacom, the man who began the war, is rather benign. She was equally positive in her portrayal of her own master, Quinnapin, who comes across in the narrative as a dignified and rather distant male authority figure. The real focal point of her hatred was Wetamoo, the mistress who had immediate control of her day-to-day life in captivity.

As she was sitting in Wetamoo's wigwam, Metacom's maid came in with a child in her arms and asked Mary to give her a piece of her apron to make a diaper for it. She told her she would not. Even when her mistress commanded her to give up the apron, she refused. When the maid threatened to tear it off herself, Mary angrily retorted that if she did, she would tear her coat. Wetamoo raised a stick "big enough to have killed me," but Mary dodged it so that it stuck into the mat of the wigwam instead. While Wetamoo struggled to pull it out, she "ran to the Maid and gave her all my Apron." [33] Had Mary Rowlandson been in her own village instead of an Indian camp and had she been able to find a stick (or a shovel or a pot ladle), a similar trespass upon her property or her dignity might have turned into the sort

of squabble so frequently reported in county court records. An inability to resist rather than any lack of assertiveness determined Mary Rowlandson's behavior.

Although she could identify to a certain extent with Metacom and with her master, she was seemingly unaware of the suffering in the Indian camp. Her hunger and cold and pain obliterated the desperation of the Indians who were literally fleeing for their lives. When a "savage" extended human sympathy, she could only attribute it to Providence. When Wctamoo's baby died, she observed that now there would be more room in the wigwam.[34] Mary Rowlandson's narrative is deeply and pervasively racist, yet as many scholars have shown, it is not always difference which arouses fear of an alien person or culture so much as a perceived yet repellent sameness. This is amply illustrated in Mary's story. She speaks of the Indians as "Salvage Bears" and "roaring lions," yet the most striking and pervasive animal imagery in the narrative is that which she applies to herself. In captivity, she had "only a little Swill for the body, and then like a Swine, must ly down on the ground." [35]

Food is a dominant motif in her portrait of herself. She expended most of her energy begging, contriving, or working for food and yet her hunger was never satisfied. She relished food she had always refused before, things that

even dogs or pigs wouldn't touch--"nuts, acorns, hartychocks, Lilly roots, Ground-beans, Horse guts and ears, wild birds, Bear, venison, Beaver, Tortois, Frogs, Squirrels, Dogs, Skunks, Battlesnakes; yea, the very Bark of Trees." [36] Eating this wild food, she became wild herself. She marvelled at her own "Wolvish appetite." When given something to eat, she would burn her mouth rather than wait for it to cool. Seeing an Indian with a basket of horse liver, she begged a piece:

What, says he, can you eat Horse-liver? I told him I would try, if he would give me a piece, which he did, and I laid it on the coals to roast; but before it was half ready the got half away from me, so that I was fain to take the rest and eat it as it was, with the blood about my mouth. [37]

Another time, she found two English children in a wigwam when she went begging. The squaw was boiling horses feet and offered her a little piece. She ate it quickly, watching one of the small children struggling to chew a sinewy chunk, "sucking, gnawing, chewing and slabbering of it in the mouth and hand, then I took it of the Child, and eat it my self, and savoury it was to my taste." [38] There was no false delicacy in this Puritan wife! In fact, there are several incidents which suggest that her Indian captors were more fastidious than she and may even have found her ways somewhat repulsive. When she met Metacom for the second time, he gave her a looking glass and told her to wash herself. [39]

Mary Rowlandson's description of her own animal nature in captivity--her groveling, her begging, her unkempt state--are consistent with her theology and with her Calvinist perceptions of the depravity of humankind. In this view, all men and women are savage outside of God's covenant. But her own debasement served another purpose as well. The one quality she most consistently attributed to her Indian captors was pride--the worldly pride that would inevitably lead to a fall. She was subjected, they were haughty. The oldest of her master's three wives was "a severe and proud Dame...bestowing every day in dressing her self neat as much time as any of the Gentry of the land: powdering her hair, and painting her face, going with Neck-laces, with Jewels in her ears, and Bracelets upon her hands." The gentility of the Indian wife was expressed not just in her concern for clothing but in the work which she did, which was "to make Girdles of Wampon and Beads." [40] Beside her artifice, Mary Rowlandson's knitting was servile, as she must have known. She was both repelled and fascinated by the pretentious and colorful clothing of her mistress.

In the experience of captivity Mary Rowlandson found a pattern of her own salvation. In the account which she left, students of Puritanism can discern a familiar psychological type. [41] An acute consciousness of rank and

order are coupled in her portrait with a deep sense of sinfulness and of the fragility of human effort. Long habit as well as immediate need put needles in her hands and peas in her pocket, but though her own skills could sustain her they could not save her. Knowing the superiority of spiritual things, she found herself relishing the basest of material food, both resisting and embracing her own subjection. Rejecting pride, she projected it upon her captors, finding personal redemption but no charity for her enemy in the humiliation of captivity.

In comparison with Mary Rowlandson, Elizabeth Hansen is a bland and almost passive heroine, perhaps because her narrative is shorter and less colorful, but also because she embodied qualities so often associated with an insipid and confining femininity. She not only turned the other cheek, she almost seemed to offer it. At the end of one long day's journey, her master commanded her to fetch water, but having sat awhile on the cold ground, she found she could not stand. So she crawled on her hands and knees along the ground until a young woman from another family took pity on her and went to get the water.[42] This incident was characteristic of her behavior throughout--never any effort to resist a command, simply a mute appeal to justice in an unquestioning and abject obedience. Yet her gentleness was no mere extension of her weakness but a consciously willed

religious response. Elizabeth Hansen simply refused to meet violence with violence. According to one New Hampshire minister, the Hansens might not have been captured if Elizabeth's husband had not been a stiff quaker, full of enthusiasm, and ridiculing the military power, would on no account be influenced to come into garrison."[43]

Elizabeth Hansen, like Mary Rowlandson, struggled with hunger and cold. She found it distasteful to eat the entrails of wild animals without cleaning them and marveled that what had once seemed foul could now taste sweet, yet the central focus of her narrative was not on the helplessness and vulnerability of humanity but on the power of "God's kindness" to surmount "man's cruelty" as the title of her narrative said. Kindness could be found in the wilderness as well as among Christians--"these People being very kind and helpful to one another, which is very commendable," she wrote.[44]

After a twenty-six days' march into new France, Elizabeth found herself in an encampment of Canadian Indians, where she quickly established friendships with the women of her master's family, despite a barrier of language. Because her fourteen-day-old infant had been spared in the attack, her most persistent anxiety during the trek was a waning supply of milk. Her breasts almost dry, she warmed icy brook water in her mouth, letting it trickle out onto

the nipple as the child sucked. This with an occasional broth made from beaver guts kept the baby from dehydrating, though by the twenty sixth day all the joints of her back bone were visible. Despairing for her daughter's life, Elizabeth was prepared to learn from a friendly squaw who one day showed her how to clean and grind walnut kernels with water until they "looked like milk," cooking this liquid with fine corn meal to make a thin gruel which proved nourishing. Elizabeth noted, with obvious admiration, that this was a method often used by Indian mothers. [45]

Elizabeth developed close bonds with the women of the family, who were perhaps as frightened of the master as of herself.

What is most striking about this section of the narrative, however, is her portrayal of the master. Although he had beaten her, hit her little son, and threatened to kill her baby, he was never merely a "savage" but always a struggling human being. She was terrified of his tantrums, yet she observed that "when-ever he was in such a Temper, he wanted Food, and was pinched with Hunger. But when he had Success in hunting, to take either Bears, Beavers, Bucks or Fowls, on which he could fill his Belly, he was better humoured, tho' he was naturally of a very hot and passionate Temper." Dutiful service (and perhaps her refusal to hate) were her witness against him. After a time

the Lord himself "did seasonably interpose" by causing a great sickness to fall upon the master. His wife confided to Elizabeth that he considered his illness a judgment upon him for his mistreatment of the captives. (He had already convinced himself that the baby was a "devil" because it had survived so long on the trail without food.) After his recovery, he was not so passionate or so abusive. "This I took as the Lord's Doing, and it was marvellous in my Eyes." [46]

Elizabeth Hansen's cruel master was never as threatening as Mary Rowlandson's "salvages." By humanizing him, she reduced him from cosmic to domestic scale. Facing the cruel abuse of a weak and violent man, she triumphed through her own submissiveness. Like Richardson's Pamela, she knew the moral power in weakness. The underlying message of her story is clear--God will avenge the weak and powerless, but only so long as they remain weak and powerless. Aggressiveness and virtue are incompatible. In a Quaker narrative of 1729, submissiveness is a Christian rather than a peculiarly feminine quality, though the alignment of the poor captive and the equally downtrodden Indian women against the single abusive male is striking, foreshadowing the helpless victims of temperance tracts or novels.

Mary Rowlandson's narrative had epic dimensions because her personal struggle paralleled a national struggle. Religious, political, and personal themes coalesced as they had in the tale of Hannah Duston. Elizabeth Hansen, on the other hand, stood outside the religious establishment of northern New England. She could sympathize with the Indians because as a Quaker she did not fully identify with the war. The two narratives describe a religion of outsiders and of insiders. As a ministers wife and a covenanted church member, Mary Rowlandson belonged to the elect. For her, salvation came through identification with the powerful--with the Saints and with God. For Elizabeth Hansen salvation did not come through affiliation but through the incorporation or the discovery of God-like qualities in herself or others.

Now, if we extend the analysis of their captivity beyond the specific imprisonment to the larger world of northern New England, considering the day-to-day and perhaps hardly realized subjection imposed by the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of the society in which they lived, the strikingly different responses of the two women suggest two religious modes available to women. (We are talking here about personal religious responses, not about specific "Puritan" or "Quaker" qualities). A woman like Mary Rowlandson, struggling to maintain order against the

wilderness within, would identify strongly with the role of housekeeper. She would be a supportive wife and a friendly neighbor to women like herself, but extremely suspicious of outsiders and perhaps even aggressive when she felt that her authority or her property had been challenged. Because her sense of worth came through affiliation rather than through merit, she would ally strongly with a minister and a church. A woman like Elizabeth Hansen might identify more closely with the nurturing roles. She would be more trusting of her neighbors, more likely to cross barriers of gender and race in a religious context, but ironically even more submissive and obedient, even less likely to resist perceived injustice or oppression, even more reluctant to assume male qualities, and as a consequence more fully "feminine" in the nineteenth century sense. Although she would have substituted the word Christian for the word woman, Elizabeth Hansen would have understood the meaning of Hawthorne's comment that "woman must strike through her own heart to reach a human life, whatever were the motive that impelled her." [47]

There is something disturbingly familiar about the heroism of Elizabeth Hansen. As Ann Douglas has described it, popular literature in nineteenth-century America was permeated with just such innocent victims, pacific civilians, for example, "massacred or mutilated in a war for which" they had "no responsibility," or guiltless wives of

the temperance literature, or long-suffering and ever-patient mothers.[48] Such imagery was not invented in the nineteenth century, of course, as Hansen's story reminds us. It is inherent in Christianity. Nor was it passed on to nineteenth-century America by Quakers, though it was, as Douglas demonstrates, promoted by religious "outsiders," that is by members of churches which were tolerated (as Dover's Quakers were) but on the periphery of social and political life.[49]

But in northern New England, through most of the colonial period, religion was never far from politics, despite the predominance of women in the churches. "Feminization" is not just a matter of membership but of doctrine. Passive victims could exist side by side with avenging Jaels in the ministerial literature of New England because Old Testament religion coexisted with New. In 1745, newly awakened farmers, fishermen, and merchants captured the French fortress at Louisburg in the name of the Lord of Hosts. There was no Hannah Duston in this war, because the focus of conflict had shifted from isolated garrisons to battlefields, but the Old Testament God was there. As the troops prepared to sail from Boston harbor, the chaplain of the expedition, old Samuel Moody of York, supposedly seized a hatchet and exclaimed, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon." He would have the satisfaction of tearing down the

crosses and images in the French church and of preaching the first protestant sermon in the fortress.[50] Perhaps those of his parishioners who had lost children to the French over the years could take comfort in that.

* * *

When Hannah Duston sat in Cotton Mather's church on that morning in 1697, she heard herself simultaneously praised as a deliverer of Zion and admonished as a religious laggard. "You are not now the Slaves of Indians, as you were a few Days ago," Mather had told the captives, "but if you continue Unhumbled, in your Sins, You will be the Slaves of Devils." [51] In his private discussion with her, Mather must have discovered that she, like many other men and women of her generation, had neglected the church. Though baptized as children, they had failed either to "own the covenant" or to present the evidence of conversion necessary for full membership. Cotton Mather was determined to set New England's heroic Jael squarely upon the road to salvation. Perhaps his sermon had some effect, but if so the timing was curious. Hannah Duston owned the covenant in Haverhill First Church in June of 1719, just twenty two years after her deliverance from the Indians. She was admitted to the Lord's table five years later in March of 1724 at the age of 67. In her profession taken down by Haverhill's minister, she spoke of her captivity as "the

Comfortablest time that ever I had In my Affliction God made his Word Comfortable to me." [52]

Hannah Duston's long journey to the house of the Lord was not unusual. Few folks in Haverhill were owning the covenant in the last years of the seventeenth century. Perhaps the church had grown complacent under the long ministry of John Ward. Perhaps the new pastor, Benjamin Rolfe, lacked energy or was too involved with the immediate crises of war to worry about membership statistics. For Hannah, there were even more pressing problems. Soon after her captivity she became pregnant again (for the thirteenth time in her twenty years of marriage), and there were meals to be gotten and pigs to be slopped and a new house to build. Hannah's eventual conversion followed a rejuvenation of the church under an aggressive new minister, John Brown, and came after a period of relative stability for the town and for the Duston family. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, Thomas Duston built a solid brick house, matching his wife's brief moment of glory by frequent and apparently valued service in community affairs. [53] The "comforts" of captivity had been followed by other comforts more tangible.

What we can't know, of course, is the state of Hannah's soul during that long period of growing and waiting. Did Mather's words return to her in the night as she stood over

a sick bed or watched her parents die? "Let me tell you, A Slavery to Devils, to be in Their Hands, is worse than to be in the Hands of Indians." Pondering these words, did she ever think of her sister Elizabeth? If so, she did not say so. In her confession, she mentioned hearing "Mr Moody preach" (Samuel Moody of York?), and she said she had found comfort in the scriptures. She had wanted to offer herself "from time to time ever since the Settlement of the present Minister," but "Delays and fears" had prevailed upon her. Now at the "Eleventh hour," she asked to be admitted among the Saints.[54] Quietly, like hundreds of other women before her, this fierce daughter of Zion submitted to the law of Christ.

Hannah Duston's heroism belongs to a particular historical moment. Her violence was possible because she had been raised in a world where women slaughtered pigs and fought their neighbors; it was permissible because it was directed in wartime at a hated enemy; and it was publishable because the established religion in New England had not yet become the refuge of the weak.

1. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New-Hampshire, II (Dover, N.H.: 1812), pp. 226-234; Everett S. Stackpole, Old Kittery and Her Families, (Lewiston, Maine: 1903), pp. 184-199; Charles E. Clark, Maine: A Bicentennial History (W.W. Norton: New York, 1977), p. 45 and The Eastern Frontier (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 82-89.
2. Robert F. Lawrence, The New Hampshire Churches, (Claremont, NH: 1856), p. 320; NLD, 520-521.
3. Belknap, History of New-Hampshire, II, 226, 228; Mary Cochrane Rogers, Glimpses of an Old Social Capital, (Boston, 1923), p. 11.
4. Lawrence, New Hampshire Churches, p. 320; Minutes of Dover Monthly Meeting, 1701-1784, Dover Public Library, microfilm, reel 3.
5. The Church Record of Hampton Falls, N.H., copied from the original by Emily Wilder Leavitt, MS, New England Historic Genealogical Society, pp. 6-9.
6. Philip J. Greven, Jr., "Youth, Maturity, and Religious Conversion: A Note on the Ages of Converts in Andover, Massachusetts, 1711-1749," EHQ 108 (1972), pp. 126-134.
7. The Records of the Church of Christ at Barwick, 21 Dec. 1701 to 14 Oct. 1829, MS, First Parish Federated Church, South Berwick, Maine.
8. Richard L. Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), p. 62. Bushman says that this was a phenomenon of "outliers" rather than of new towns in Connecticut, which were notoriously slow to establish churches. If, as I believe, women were especially interested in convenient access to the meeting house, the existence of a distant church (which husbands might attend more frequently than wives) may have been a greater motive than the entire absence of church.

9. Everett S. Stackpole and Lucien Thompson, History of the Town of Durham, New Hampshire (Concord, N.H., n.d.) I, pp. 169-184 has the long succession of petitions and counterpetitions from the Oyster River parish, regarding the location of the meeting house.
10. History of Bedford, New Hampshire, Being Statistics Compiled on the Occasion of the One Hundredth Anniversary (Boston: 1851), p. 136. The anonymous author said the story came from Ann Orr "who had it from the lips of old Mrs. Smith."
11. The Winthrop Papers, Part III, Col. MHS, Fifth Series, I (Boston, 1871), p. 104-5.
12. Records of Chebacco Parish, 1676-1726, MS, Essex Institute, pp. 7-17.
13. Records of Chebacco, p. 18.
14. Essex Files, VII, 245. In their own town they became heroines. See Celebration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Organization of the Congregational Church & Parish in Essex, Mass. (Salem, 1884), p. 45.
15. Increase Mather, An Essay For the Recording of Illustrious Providences (Boston, 1684) gives examples both of folk magic and of ministerial opposition. e.g. when Mary Hortado of Salmon Falls was tormented by demons, she hung the door with bayes, Mather did not doubt that the remedy worked but deplored it. Pp. 167, 248-249. Two species of folk magic specifically prohibited by Mather in the long chapter on superstition (pp. 248-288) were employed in the parsonage at Salem village--divining with egg white and detecting witchcraft with urine. Chadwick Hansen, Witchcraft at Salem, (New York: George Braziller, 1969), pp. 30-32.
16. Patricia Trainor O'Malley, "Rowley, Massachusetts, 1639-1730: Dissent, Division and Delimitation in a Colonial Town," unpub. Ph.D. diss., Boston College,

1975, pp. 61-65.

17. O'Malley, "Rowley," pp. 67-68, quoting from church book kept by Phillips.
18. O'Malley, "Rowley," p. 69.
19. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, Salem Possessed, (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 54-56.
20. Boyer and Nissenbaum put the Putnams at the head of an anti-town, pro-church pro-autonomy movement in the village. The facts don't add up very well in Burroughs case. Captain Putnam promoted the church, but obviously disliked Burroughs. Even though he had welcomed him into his home in 1681, he publicly humiliated him in 1683. The controversy here seems personal rather than economical or political.
21. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, ed., The Salem Witchcraft Papers, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), I, 176.
22. Witchcraft Papers, I, 172-174.
23. "Church Records of the Rev. Hugh Adams," NEHGR, XXX (1876) p. 59, NLD, p. 184.
24. Prov. Papers of New Hampshire, IX, 235-236.
25. Deodat Lawson, "A Brief and True Narrative of Witchcraft at Salem Village," in George Lincoln Burr, ed. Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1946), pp. 152-154.
26. "The Diary of Nicholas Gilman," ed. William Kidder, unpub. MA thesis, University of New Hampshire, 1972, pp. 253, 243.

27. Boyer and Nissentaun, Salem Possessed, pp. 24-30 compare the "fits" of the Salem girls with some of the more bizarre manifestations in the Great Awakening at Northhampton. I am making a slightly different point here. Mary Reed's behavior does not seem to have been tortured at all, but rather passive and quiet, but like the girls in Salem she conveyed information to the larger community which she received in visions.

28. "Diary of Nicholas Gilman," 256-263.

29. "Diary of Nicholas Gilman," 261; although Gilman had been preaching in Durham on and off for months, Mary Gilman made her first journey there in September. They moved in October; Mary made long trips to Exeter in November, December, January, and March, and had been away for most of the two weeks prior to Mary Reed's visit, having come home for just one day on March 18, pp. 221, 224, 226-227, 255-257. In December and January, the Gilmans had lost two children to the throat distemper, p. 235, 237. Their distress seems to have turned Gilman even more passionately toward religion but to have pulled Mary home to her mother in Exeter. Had she been present, there would have been nothing improper about the overnight visits of the young women.

30. "Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, 1682," in Charles H. Lincoln, Narrative of the Indian Wars 1675-1699, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1913), p. 116. The quote, from the introduction, is amply reflected in the narrative itself.

31. Rowlandson, pp. 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 144, 146.

32. Rowlandson, p. 154.

33. Rowlandson, p. 142.

34. Rowlandson, p. 144.

35. Rowlandson, p. 145, 161.
36. Rowlandson, p. 159.
37. Rowlandson, p. 132-133.
38. Rowlandson, p. 149.
39. Rowlandson, p. 150.
40. Rowlandson, pp. 150-154.
41. e.g. Murray G. Murphey, "The Psychodynamics of Puritan Conversion," American Quarterly, XXXI (Summer 1979), pp. 140-147, for the relation between religion and personality.
42. Elizabeth Hansen, "God's Mercy Surmounting Man's Cruelty," in The Garland Library of Narrative of North American Indian Captivities, selected and arranged by Wilcomb E. Washburn, (New York: Garland, 1977), p. 31.
43. Samuel Penhallow, The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians, (Boston, 1726), reprinted in Col. New Hampshire Historical Society (1824, 1871), I, 109.
44. Hansen, p. 16.
45. Hansen, p. 24-25.
46. Hansen, p. 23-30.
47. see note 11, chapter 9.

48. Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture, (New York: Avon, 1978), p. 150 and chapter 4, passim.
49. Barbara Welter first advanced this argument in "The Feminization of American Religion: 1800-1860," Insights and Parallels, ed. William L. O'Neill, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Burgess, 1973), pp. 305-331.
50. Clifford K. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, IV, 363.
51. Cotton Mather, Humiliations follow'd with Deliverances (Boston, 1697), pp. 42-48.
52. Haverhill Church Book, Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass., n.p; the profession of faith is now on display at "Euttonwoods," the museum of the Haverhill Historical Society. It has been reprinted in "The Story of Hannah Duston," (Haverhill, Massachusetts: The Duston-Dustin Family Association, 1959), pp. 13-14.
53. The rejuvenation of the church is quite apparent in the Church Book. In a summary, Brown wrote: "The Number above set down by Mr Gardner is 17. The Number of the persons here named below on this page is 55. & I think but 3 records have come to ye Lord's Table!" Exclamation points are unusual in church records. Brown was obviously proud of his record. Thomas Duston's affairs are detailed in "The Story of Hannah Duston," pp. 16-24. The brick house in Haverhill is a restoration.
54. "The Story of Hannah Duston," quoting the confession, pp. 13-14.

Afterword

In a small burying ground in Keene, New Hampshire there is a stone commemorating the virtues of Madam Ruth Whitney, who died in November of 1788. She had married and survived two Massachusetts ministers, had lived through community conflicts and a revolution, had seen her oldest son exiled as a loyalist, and had finally come to live in a picturesque New Hampshire town centered around a village church, where her son-in-law was growing rich as a trustee of loyalist estates and a "crisp forecloser of mortgages." None of this turmoil was reflected in her epitaph, which like hundreds of others recognized the economy in familiar phrases. "As this stone cannot tell all her virtues," it said, "suffice it to say, that as a wife she was prudent and faithful, as a mother discreet and tender, as a neighbor friendly and charitable, as a Christian intelligent and exemplary." [1] The memorialist neglected to add a reference to servants. An oversight rather than any commitment to egalitarian housekeeping probably accounts for that; Madam Whitney had

undoubtedly been a kind and "aweful" mistress in her time.

Ideals have a staying power seldom reflected in life. Madam Whitney's world was not Dorothy Dudley's world. Yet the lives of both women were defined, if not described, in the roles paraded in their epitaphs. As this study has attempted to show, those roles were neither simple nor inconsequential. Understanding them is important both to the history of colonial America and to the history of American women.

In the study of early New England, gender is as important a category as race, wealth, age, geography, or religion. If women had indeed lived in a fixed and enchanted circle, sealed off from the disparate, squabbling, and struggling world of neighborhoods and towns, their story would still be important to an understanding of the colonial past. But as we have seen, the circle of female life spun outward into the web of community and religious life. In churches and in neighborhoods, women protected and promoted their own interests, using their influence as obedient wives, their authority as deputy husbands, their power as friendly neighbors, and their stature as experienced Christians. The story of women is important not simply because it affected what we have come to know as the history of early new England but because it was part of that history. It is hardly possible to write about "community"

in such a setting while ignoring the distinct interests of women or to write about "family" while focusing entirely upon fathers and sons--as in fact a number of important works in colonial history in the past ten years have done. To borrow a metaphor from midwifery, women have for too long been seen as bearers of a history to which men have contributed the "spiritous part."

Historians cannot be blamed, of course, for failing to see what society as a whole had long ignored. The recovery of women's history is part of a larger movement to reassess and redefine the position of women in the contemporary world. "Good Wives," then, is addressed not just to colonial history but to the larger history of American women. In recent years, that history has been moving from an early preoccupation with mid-nineteenth century reform and has persuasively demonstrated the significance of the ordinary and the domestic. Yet even the best of recent work sees the colonial period (whether defined as pre-nineteenth-century or pre-revolutionary) as a static backdrop to later changes. This study had suggested that many key features of those changes, including the magnification of motherhood, the idealization of conjugal love, and the elevation of female religiosity, were clearly visible in northern New England before 1750. Other features of women's history in the early nineteenth century, such as

the organization of charitable or moral reform societies, had antecedents in the informal but crucial interaction of women in colonial neighborhoods.

This is not to deny significant differences between seventeenth and nineteenth century women, but it is to argue that a search for a "turning point" in women's history may be misplaced. The story of female experience in New England is not to be found in a linear progression from darkness into light, from constricted to expanding opportunities, from negative to positive valuation (or vice versa), but in a convoluted and sometimes tangled embroidery of loss and gain, accommodation and resistance. There can be no simple explanation of female status because that status is in itself so complex. To enlarge the role of deputy husband might mean to contract the often highly cherished roles of housekeeper and mother. To enhance the domestic might mean to neglect the communal, to control reproduction to lose one's sexual nature, to abjure violence to abandon the right to resist.

Such changes were neither willfully imposed nor consciously chosen. They were part of much larger changes in the history of the western world, yet they are best understood in the close exploration of the lives of ordinary women and men living in particular places and times.

(Sarah Sevey) is my Name,
England is my Nation,
(Portsmouth) is my dwelling place,
And Christ is my salvation.

From Portsmouth in 1733 to Jay, Maine in 1810, New England girls worked similar sentiments onto the linen ground of their samplers.[2] Their lives were defined not only by gender, but by a political structure, a geographic and demographic setting, and a matrix of cultural and religious values. If a fuller understanding of colonial history requires women's history, then the reverse is also true.

To borrow a metaphor from Puritan sermon literature, good social history, like marriage, requires "mutual supports."

1. Mrs. Josiah Carpenter, Gravestone Inscriptions. . .in the State of New Hampshire, (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1913), p. 23. Mrs. Whitney was the widow of the Reverend David Stearns of Lunenburg, Massachusetts, and the Rev. Aaron Whitney of Petersham. Sibley's Harvard Graduates, x, 260; <xii, 63; <xiii, 645-6; <xiv, 90-92, 377-8, for accounts of husbands and sons.

2. Caroline Cole Hcllingsworth, "Embroidery in the Society's Collection," Old Time New England, <lvi (1966), 69; Glee Krueger, New England Samplers To 1840, (Sturbridge, Massachusetts: Old Sturbridge Village, 1978), Figures 12 and 18; Ethel Stanwood Bolton and Eva Johnston Coe, American Samplers, (Boston: The Massachusetts Society of Colonial Dames of America, 1921), pp. 244, 316. Bolton and Coe date this verse from 1708 in America but do not indicate where it was first used. Sometimes the "nation" is England, sometimes New England.

Bibliographic Essay

Ten years ago, in an essay urging the restoration of "the actual record of women's contributions" in the American past, Gerda Lerner recommended concentration on the post-revolutionary era, suggesting that "the story of colonial women can be quite fully traced through secondary literature." ("New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History," Journal of Social History, 3:1 (Fall, 1969), pp. 53-62.) In retrospect, her statement seems astonishing, yet given the dearth of research on American women in any era, it was understandable. For colonial women, there were after all a number of notable volumes produced in the later nineteenth or early twentieth centuries: Alice Morse Earle's many books, including Colonial Dames and Good Wives (Boston, 1895) and Home Life in Colonial Days (New York, 1898); Elizabeth Anthony Dexter's Colonial Women of Affairs (Boston, 1924); Mary Sumner Benson's Women in Eighteenth-Century America (New York, 1935); and Julia Cherry Spruill's Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies (Chapel Hill), N.C., 1938).

These were pioneering works, important but limited, primarily anecdotal rather than analytical, heavily weighted toward the eighteenth century, and of course untuned to the sorts of economic and social distinctions which later

historians would find essential. Their insights were not pursued in later works. Eugenie Lecnard, Sophie Drinker, and Miriam Holden's exhaustive but uncritical bibliography, The American Women in Colonial and Revolutionary Times, 1565-1800 (Philadelphia, 1962) gives the illusion of fullness where none exists. Tracing their entries for the prerevolutionary period can only confirm the superficial attention which women had received in colonial histories.

As a consequence, in most surveys and in many specialized studies of nineteenth-century women, the colonial period was seen as a static, dimly sketched but at the same time essential backdrop to later changes. If the emphasis was on the emergence of feminism, as in Eleanor Flexner's Century of Struggle (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), the colonial period was seen as an era of suppression and superstition. If the emphasis was on the development of "Victorian" womanhood, as in Page Smith's Daughters of the Promised Land (Boston and Toronto, 1970), early America became a world of shared work and healthy sensuality.

Although the position of Puritan women was sympathetically considered in Edmund S. Morgan's The Puritan Family (Boston, 1944), most excursions into family history gave little attention to wives and mothers. Byron Fairchild's Messrs. William Pepperell (Ithaca, N.H., 1954) was correctly named. The various Mistresses Pepperell do

not appear. Equally narrow in their concept of family were John Waters, whose Otis Family in Provincial and Revolutionary Massachusetts (Chapel Hill, N.D., 1968) ignored even so revolutionary an Otis as Mercy Warren, and Philip Greven, whose Four Generations (Ithaca, 1970) might better have been titled "fathers and sons." Family historians less concerned with political and economic than with psychological issues have necessarily given greater attention to women. John Demos, in his suggestive but thinly documented study of Plymouth colony, A Little Commonwealth (New York, 1970), considered the position of wives and mothers as well as husbands, fathers, children, and servants. Curiously, however, a focus on childrearing has not always produced awareness of gender differences, perhaps because the psychological models upon which such studies are based have seen the psychology of women as the mirror image of the psychology of men. Philip Greven's The Protestant Temperament (New York, 1977) is almost as single-mindedly male as Four Generations, if only because his few female examples fit his theoretical frame so poorly. Psycho-history has yet to profit from the revisionist approaches of such psychologists as Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston, 1976), or Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering (Los Angeles, 1978).

At the same time, a number of historians, bringing narrow questions to largely unexplored materials, have begun to question many assumptions about the position of women in the early American past. Nancy F. Cott explored marital status as seen through divorce records in two articles, "Divorce and the Changing Status of Women in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," WMQ 3rd ser., XXXII (1976), 586-614, and "Eighteenth-Century Family and Social Life Revealed in Massachusetts Divorce Records," Journal of Social History, X (1976), 20-43. Mary Beth Norton undermined the assumptions of Elizabeth Anthony Dexter in her survey of the loyalist papers, described in "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," WMQ 3rd ser., XXXII (1976), 386-409. She has developed this argument using other materials in Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800, (Boston, 1980). Interpretations of female religious status based upon sermon literature appeared in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," American Quarterly, XXVIII (1976), pp. 20-40; Margaret W. Masson, "The Typology of the Female as a Model for the Regenerate: Puritan Preaching, 1690-1730," Signs II (1976), pp. 304-315; and Lonna Malmsheiner, "Daughters of Zion: New England Roots of American Feminism," New England Quarterly,

(1977) 484-504. Mary Maples Dunn compared two religious traditions in "Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in The Early Colonial Period," American Quarterly, XXX (1978). Using probate records, Alexander Keyssar challenged earlier notions in his study of "Widowhood in Eighteenth Century Massachusetts: A Problem in the History of the Family," Perspectives in American History, VIII (1974), 83-119. Daniel Scott Smith and Michael Hindus raised new issues in a study of marriage and birth records, "Premarital Pregnancy in America 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, V (Spring 1975), 537-570. Such articles demonstrate the fruitfulness of close examination of specific issues. The study of colonial women, especially as seen in the larger context of early American culture, has barely begun.

In the colonial period, of course, it is seldom possible to locate and identify "female" materials. The record of women's lives is there, but it is largely uncatalogued and undefined. The footnotes to individual chapters form a more complete essay on sources than can possibly be written here. A full list of all the materials used would be more misleading than helpful since few references yielded more than a scrap or two of information on female life. Five major classes of documents, can be more fully described, however.

1. Court Records were the single most important source for female attitudes and especially for female speech. Fortunately, northern New England has two magnificent collections of printed court records. Harriet Tapley's transcription of seventeenth-century Essex County records includes eight volumes published in the twentieth century and a ninth volume added more recently. Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County (Salem, Mass: Essex Institute, 1911-1975). Additional Essex court papers have been printed in The Salem Witchcraft Papers, ed. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, 3 vol. (New York, 1977). Manuscript court papers from seventeenth-century New Hampshire have been mounted in eleven volumes kept at the New Hampshire State Archives, Concord. For eighteenth century New Hampshire and for Essex County later court papers are filed by individual case, making it almost impossible to use them for the sort of information gathered here. The Maine Province and Court Records, on the other hand, continue into the eighteenth century in an ongoing project of the Maine Historical Society at Portland.

2. Probate Records, including inventories, have been published for early Essex County and Maine but not for New Hampshire. (The Maine inventories are in the first volume of the Maine Province and Court Records. The Essex inventories are in The Probate Records of Essex County, 3

vol. (Salem, Mass: 1916-1920). Published records barely hint at the abundance of manuscript probate records in state and county archives. New Hampshire probate records are in manuscript at the state archives and on microfilm at the New Hampshire Historical Society. Maine inventories are in the York County Court House, Alfred, Maine. Essex County Inventories are at the Essex County Registry of Probate in Salem, where a lone historian may compete for attention with droves of twentieth-century lawyers. For a helpful introduction to the use of probate records, see Gloria L. Main, "Probate Records as a Source for Early American History," WMC 3rd Ser., XXXII (1975), 89-99, and in the same issue, Daniel Scott Smith, "Underregistration and Bias in Probate Records: An Analysis of Data from Eighteenth Century Hingham, Massachusetts," 100-112.

3. Family Papers for the period before 1750 often consist of deeds, wills, and business accounts, though a few collections offer series of letters. The richest source of family papers for northern New England is the Essex Institute. The most useful collections for this project were the Holycke Family Collection, including thirteen boxes spanning three centuries; the Curwen Family Manuscripts, mounted in three volumes; and the Barton Family Papers, including the Marston family correspondence in volume one. The published Saltonstall Papers, 1607-1815, Robert E.

Moody, ed. (Boston, 1972) have an almost unique set of letters from a mother to daughter. The Massachusetts Historical Society has published both the William Pepperell Papers and the Jonathan Belcher Papers. Both have occasional references to their wives, though no female correspondence has survived. The unpublished Belcher letters are useful and have been conveniently indexed at the end of the published volume. (Mass Hist. Soc. Collections, VI).

4. Diaries for the region have been catalogued in William Matthews, American Diaries, An Annotated Bibliography (Berkeley, Calif., 1945) and in American Diaries in Manuscript 1580-1954 (Athens, Ga., 1974). Unfortunately there are no female diaries before 1750. The most detailed male diaries are those of Matthew Patten, Joseph Green, Zaccheus Collins, and Nicholas Gilman, described in chapter seven. Mary Holyoke's diary is part of a larger Holyoke collection, including almanac diaries in the Holyoke Family Collection at the Essex Institute and those family diaries published as The Holyoke Diaries 1709-1856 (Salem, Mass., 1911). The Mary Cleaveland "Diary" at the Essex Institute is a mere fragment. Male account books, on the other hand, exist in great abundance. They occasionally give glimpses of daily life, though they require industrious mining for every jewel uncovered.

Account books are catalogued separately at the New Hampshire Historical Society and at the Essex Institute.

5. Church Records can be found in archives, in trunks in church basements, or in the custody of church clerks who spend the winter in Florida. For clues to whereabouts of congregational church records, see Harold F. Worthley, An Inventory of the Records of the Particular Churches of Massachusetts Gathered 1620-1805 (Cambridge, 1970). There is much more to be learned about the activities of women in churches from a close examination of membership patterns and of disciplinary action. For a brilliant example of what can be done with local church records, see Mary F. Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840," American Quarterly, XXX (1978) 602-623.